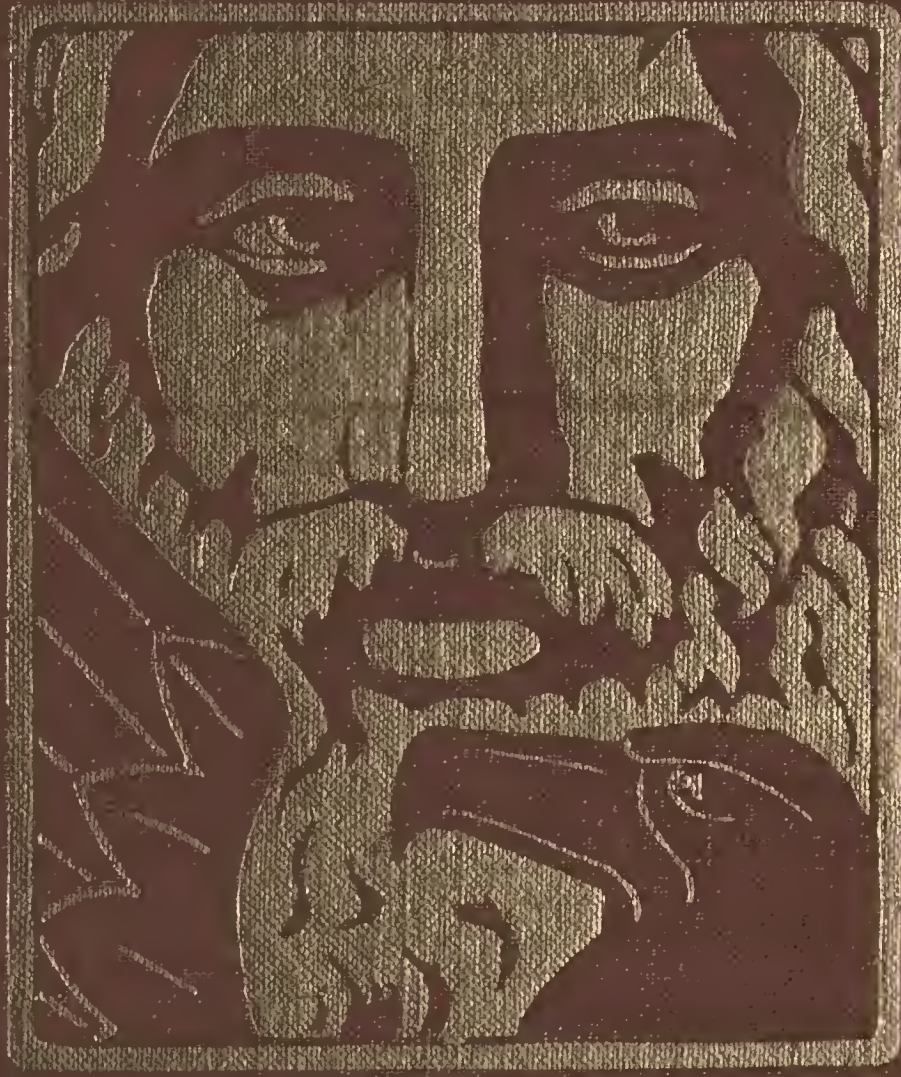


THE COUNCIL
OF THE GODS



By RUTH MARSHAW



Class PZ8

Book 1

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THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Dedicated to

THE THREE

May they be as wise as Athene
and as constant as Demeter in
their search for a happy and
a useful life



*Though you are wearied yet shall you hold your burden
Thus shall the earth and sky be held apart*

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

(Hetzgel) By

Mrs. RUTH HARSHAW



Illustrations by

NICOLAS KAISSAROFF

THOMAS S. ROCKWELL COMPANY—CHICAGO

1931

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FOREWORD

A BACKGROUND of sympathetic understanding for Greek life and thought is an important part of every child's social heritage. An essential ingredient of this background is some familiarity with Greek mythology. This mythology is so rich, and the gods and demigods are so numerous, that many a child finds himself confused rather than entranced when he first enters this realm.

There is a need, therefore, for a book which will give children a simple but accurate understanding of the gods of ancient Greece. It must hold the children's interest if it is to be of any value, and must have the savor of the Greek classics. *The Council of the Gods* is such a book.

The writer of the book, Ruth Harshaw, is unusually well qualified for the undertaking. Having been a teacher, principal, and supervisor in the Winnetka schools, she has seen clearly the need for it and the inadequacy of extant materials. Both as teacher and mother she had the touch with childhood that is necessary to make the book fit children's requirements and interests.

FOREWORD

She has the scholarship and thoroughness to give the classicist confidence in the authenticity of her work. And fortunately she has the literary ability needed for any attempt to give children a feeling for Greek literature.

To use Mrs. Harshaw's own words, "The story stands upon three legs like the tripods of ancient Greece. The first is interest. It is hoped that the story is interesting enough to hold any child to the end. The second is knowledge. When a child has read the story he should have a unified picture of the system of Greek mythology. The third is atmosphere. The story should give him a feeling for Homeric atmosphere, for without that these ancient deities are without meaning. If this third leg stands firmly then the child will enjoy the excerpts from the classical poetry which precede and are related to each chapter."

By looking at the old story of Persephone through the eyes of the gods rather than those of mortals Mrs. Harshaw has found a clever means of making each god stand out as an individual.

She has not, it is true, told all about the gods, for it is her feeling, together with many other educators, that only those facts about the gods which contribute to their dignity and beauty have any place in the education of the young. What she does tell, however, is based on the best source material, is accurate in detail, and it is always interesting and vital.

FOREWORD

The fifth grades in the Winnetka schools have served as a testing laboratory to determine the book's value and interest to children. Their verdict has been enthusiastically favorable.

The book is written in response to a genuine need. I believe it fills that need, and that children reading it will find that it makes other books and stories of Greek life and thought clearer, more interesting and meaningful.

CARLETON WASHBURNE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I GRATEFULLY acknowledge my debt to the following for the privilege of using their copyright translations:

My greatest debt is to George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., for Andrew Lang's translations of the Homeric Hymns. This story follows as closely as possible the story as told in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, and the excerpts from Andrew Lang's translation add greatly to the value of the book.

I am indebted to the following for more brief excerpts from copyright translations:

MacMillan for Butcher and Lang's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*; David McKay for translation of Homer's *Iliad* from Murray's *Manual of Mythology*, and for a translation of one of the Homeric Hymns from Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*; Oxford Press for *Night in the Valley*, translated by J. A. Pott; J. W. McKail's translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, and C. S. Caverly's translation of *Theocritus* from Livingstone's *The Pageant of Greece*.

RUTH HARSHAW.

CONTENTS

I	ZEUS LOOKS DOWN FROM OLYMPUS	23
II	HERMES, THE SWIFT-FOOTED MESSENGER	33
III	HERA IN THE PALACE OF IVORY AND GOLD	37
IV	POSEIDON, RULER OF THE SEA	45
V	ARTEMIS, GODDESS OF THE HUNT	61
VI	ATHENE AND ARES IN CONFLICT	71
VII	APHRODITE ON HER SACRED ISLAND	81
VIII	HERMES VISITS HEPHAESTUS	89
IX	HERMES SEEKS PHOEBUS APOLLO	99
X	HESTIA BEFORE HER SACRED HEARTH	107
XI	IRIS SEEKS DEMETER	113
XII	DEMETER SITS APART	121
XIII	THE GODS BID DEMETER RETURN	131
XIV	HERMES GOES TO PLUTO'S KINGDOM	141
XV	DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE	155
XVI	DEMETER RETURNS TO OLYMPUS	165
XVII	THE END OF THE OLYMPIC COUNCIL	177
XVIII	THE BANQUET OF THE GODS	187
	INDEX—GLOSSARY	195

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<i>THOUGH YOU ARE WEARIED yet shall you hold your burden</i>	<i>frontispiece</i>
<i>HIGH HEAVEN the footstool of his feet he makes</i>	27
<i>NEAR HIS QUEEN her watchful peacock spreads his thousand eyes</i>	39
<i>OLD PROTEUS SMILED as Hermes appeared; then Triton blew a sea-shell blast</i>	48-49
<i>HE YOKES TO THE CHARIOT his swift steeds and himself drives over the waves</i>	56-67
<i>SHE DRAWS HER GOLDEN BOW, sending forth shafts of sorrow</i>	64-65
<i>LET YOUR THOUGHTS be more upon justice than upon war</i>	75
<i>AND FROM THEIR MIST a lily form, rises from out the wave</i>	83
<i>TWO GIANT CYCLOPES were at work. But a moment did each turn to Hermes</i>	92-93
<i>APOLLO picked up his lyre and sang of the herds that graze in the fields</i>	101
<i>NEAR THE SACRED HEARTH would be found Hestia, its guardian and keeper</i>	109
<i>PAN RETURNS piping from the chase, breathing sweet strains on the reeds</i>	115

<i>SEED SHALL FALL fruitless upon the land until my eyes have looked upon Persephone</i>	124-125
<i>SPEEDILY he went forth beneath the hollow places of the earth</i>	135
<i>WELL DID CERBERUS KNOW the voice of Hermes, and the gates swung wide</i>	143
<i>"HAVE YOU THE FARE?" cried Charon. Some answered yes . . . some cried no</i>	148-149
<i>THE EARTH GAPPED, out leaped the prince and bore me beneath the earth</i>	158-159
<i>"ZEUS, Demeter with her daughter enters." Then all gave greeting to them</i>	168-169
<i>WHEN SPRING IS COME, then fat the lambs, then are mountains crowned with shades</i>	180-181
<i>SPRING, with green draperies flowing, danced a glad, gay dance</i>	191

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

*And glory rests upon that land,
fadeless and imperishable*

THEIR WORK LIVES AFTER THEM

LONG years ago there was a country which was but a tiny spot on the great map of the world. What this country was like, what the people thought, and what they did are all important because they were the beginners of many of the things which we value most in life today. The name of this country was Greece, and the people of this country were the ancient Greeks.

These people breathed deeply of their pure air. They looked with gladness upon their green valleys and the sharp outlines of their mountains. Thick olive trees, chief wealth of the land, and groves of cyprus, made sacred by holy temples within, formed dark patches on the landscape. The many hills led to a wall of mountains which shut the country from its neighbors on one side, while on the other side rivers and streams, fed by fresh springs, ran singing to the sea, and there the lacy coast sloped to the white foam. The sea, like a thousand silvery serpents, wound its way into the very midst of the land, forming bays and islands without number. These islands were like stepping stones leading the people to what lay beyond the glistening sea.

INTRODUCTION

“We will build great sharp-nosed ships,” the people said, “and sail this shining sea.”

And this they did. They followed their stepping stones and then journeyed beyond them to far-off places.

In far-off places these ancient Greeks found people with other thoughts than theirs, with other ways of living. What they saw as they traveled helped their minds to grow. Many of the people whom they visited became their subjects, and with buying and selling, with tribute from these many subject states, wealth poured into the money chests of the cities. Athens, above all the others, flourished and became the center of art and learning and the greatest city in all Greece.

The rule of tyrants had taught this country the value of freedom, so Athens was ruled by its people. Thus she became the first democracy in the history of the world. As Athens was first in the form of her government she became first in many other things. Among her people there came to be many leaders, and these leaders made the people of ancient Greece the most remarkable of all those who have yet lived upon the earth.

Great poems never since surpassed in beauty and power, known to all Greeks, filled them with pride in their heroic past and moved them to courageous living. And so followed a golden age when each great man inspired greatness in those about him.

With true greatness comes questioning and wonder-

INTRODUCTION

ing and desire for understanding. Many of these great ones wondered and questioned one another about right and wrong, about happiness and how to find it, about the world and the meaning of life. These men became the first philosophers, and today we read their works and learn that the thinkers of that far-away time thought much as do our great thinkers today.

Some of these questioners observed the happenings of nature, arranged in order the facts they gathered and tried to learn the truth about all things. These men became the first scientists.

In centuries past the ancestors of these Greeks had questioned one another about the disappearing of the sun and the falling of darkness, the gathering of the clouds, and the peal of the thunder. They had answered these questions simply, as a child might answer them. The sun was to them a golden-haired god who drove a shining chariot across the sky. To them it was a god of the heavens who gathered the thunder clouds, sent shafts of lightning, and watered the dry earth.

These simple answers, filled with beauty, made up the religion of the ancient Greeks. Though the scientists and philosophers of Athens, the center of Greek culture, found other answers to many of these questions, the people of this time believed and thought as their ancestors had done before them. And thus was our heritage from them enriched, for the beauty of these

INTRODUCTION

ancient myths continued to inspire painters, poets, sculptors, and architects. The creations of their hands became the foundation of all art, and the greatest of many great gifts which Greece gave to the world.

The whole glory of Greece was tied up with this ancient religion. To these people the good and the beautiful were one, and so the noblest offering to the blessed gods was beauty. Magnificent shrines were built in honor of them. Down the long vistas of the marble pillared temples could be seen statues of the loved deities, made in human form in all its perfection and beauty. They made beautiful pottery and on it with skill and patience they pictured their gods as they thought of them.

If one of those great ancients could visit our country and walk among us, he would say:

“The buildings of your capital city and many of your beautiful buildings elsewhere look strangely like the temples of my day built in honor of our gods. When I look through your museums of art, everywhere I find copies of the statues made in my time, of the gods we worshiped.”

Then would this Ancient stand proudly and look toward distant Olympus remembering that though thousands of years have passed, the greatness of the age in which he lived is still undimmed, and he would raise his arms in thanksgiving to his gods that the thoughts of his people and the works of their hands had been

INTRODUCTION

great enough to enrich the lives of all those who have lived after them.

And so follows a story of the immortal beings to whom the ancient Greeks raised their arms in worship, and who inspired this great people to many of the creations which enrich our lives today.

OLYMPUS

*For ever is the Gods' unchanging seat,
Wet with no rain and shaken by no blast,
And by no snowflake touched; but very bright
It stretches cloudless, and a splendour white
Broods over all its borders, and therein
The blessed Gods live ever in delight.*

THE ODYSSEY

*J. W. MacKail translation from
Livingstone's Pageant of Greece*

CHAPTER I



ZEUS LOOKS DOWN FROM OLYMPUS

THE gods loved by the Greeks lived upon the lofty peak of Mount Olympus. This home of the gods, wrapt in clouds and mist, unseen by mortal man, was never disturbed by storms, drenched by rain, nor invaded by snow. Here shone always warm, clear light from a sky, fair and cloudless.

Upon this lofty peak were hills and meadows, green and beautiful, and here were scattered the palaces of the gods. On that hill, the highest and fairest, lived Zeus, the greatest, the most powerful, the king of mortals and immortals. It was he, a babe, who had been hidden from Cronus, his cruel father, king of the Titans, lord of the universe, who had sought to devour him. It was he who had been cared for by the nymphs of the sea. For him the bees had gathered honey, for him the strong eagle had brought ambrosia, and to him the mother goat had given of her milk. And when he was grown such power he had that with gleam of lightning,

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

with din of thunderbolts, with shock of hundred-handed monsters he had overpowered the race of Titans. The heavens had shaken and the earth. Then turning to Atlas, the Titan of mighty bulk and terrible strength, he had spoken in thundering tones:

“Atlas, the strong, the mighty, from this time forth you shall bear upon your shoulders the weight of the heavens. Though you are wearied yet shall you hold your burden. Thus shall the earth and the sky be held apart that I may bring order to all things.”

Then to another great Titan, Prometheus (prō mē' thūs), he had given this command:

“To you, Prometheus, shall fall the labor of creating the animals which shall dwell upon the earth. And listen well, for of these animals man shall be the greatest, and of all I shall be king.”

All things had been done according to the commands of Zeus and from that time forth he had dwelt upon Olympus, and with him had dwelt the other great gods. To each had been given duties and powers, but of the twelve great gods Zeus was the most powerful, the supreme lord of the wide earth below and all that dwelt therein, and of the starry heavens above.

These gods who dwelt on Olympus knew all things of the earth below and of the heavens above, and all things lay in their power. When they left their lofty peak, their immortal home, the folds of clouds which hid

ZEUS LOOKS DOWN FROM OLYMPUS

them from mortal view were drawn aside by the fair goddesses of the seasons. Then on beautiful sandals, immortal, made of gold, they were carried over the wide ways of the earth and over boundless seas with the speed of the wind. Chariots were theirs, golden and well-wrought, drawn by immortal steeds, brazen-hoofed and swift. They walked among the stars and looked down upon the wide earth below. There they beheld mortals at work and at play, sorrowing or rejoicing. When all that they saw pleased them, and when the fragrance of earthly sacrifices was borne to the cloudy heights, the gods were joyous. Then they gathered in their gold and silver palaces for celestial feasting. But when they were displeased with what they saw, the thunder rolled and the mountains shook with their anger.

Often Zeus, the greatest of the gods, summoned all of the immortals to him, for his palace was the gathering place for all those who dwelt on Olympus. There they held counsel together on all affairs, mortal and immortal, and there they gathered to feast on ambrosia, and to sip nectar from golden cups.

It was on a morning of clear light and glistening freshness on Olympus in this long ago time that Zeus, the father of gods and men, walked among the clouds and looked down upon the earth below. The Greek name, Zeus, means radiant light of heaven, and just so the great Zeus seemed as he stood among the clouds think-

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

ing joyous thoughts. His bodily strength was great and his bearing stern, and of all the celestials he was the most wise and of all the most glorious. The united strength of all the other gods could not move him, for he could draw the gods, and the earth, and the seas to himself, and having drawn them, his power was so great that, if he willed, he could suspend all from Olympus by a golden chain. The great poet Homer pictured him in all of his power and splendor:

*He, whose all-conscious eyes the world behold,
The eternal Thunderer sat, enthroned in gold.
High heaven the footstool of his feet he makes,
And wide beneath him all Olympus shakes.*

*He spoke, and awful bends his sable brows,
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod,
The stamp of fate and sanction of the God:
High heaven with trembling the dread signal took,
And Olympus to the center shook.*

HOMER
Pope's translation

The thoughts of the great Zeus had been for many days upon the affairs of the gods, and there had been little time for considering the needs of mortals below. It was with keen pleasure that his thoughts turned to

Zeus was called Jove by the Romans.



*“High heaven the footstool of his feet he makes,
And wide beneath him all Olympus shakes”*

ZEUS LOOKS DOWN FROM OLYMPUS

them upon this day. This was the time that Zeus most loved to look upon the earth. It was the time when flowers burst freshly into bloom and fruit formed upon tree and vine. A smile came to the stern face of the god for he thought to see mortals feasting and offering sacrifices before his sacred altars. Joy filled his heart. Joy because of work accomplished for the gods and joy for the happiness he thought to find among mortals below. He would summon the other eleven great Olympian gods for a feast upon this day. The music of the flute and the harp, and the rhythm of the dance should bring them delight as they feasted in his spacious hall. It would be a festive day to welcome new life and happiness upon the earth.

Joyously the immortal king found a place from which his gaze could travel far. He bent forward his powerful head that he might better penetrate the misty light. The rays of the morning sun had not yet touched the earth. He turned his head slowly from left to right. The joy which had shone in his countenance faded. Again he turned his head slowly. A frown appeared upon his noble brow. He shook his powerful head, swaying his heavy curls. Indeed he beheld a strange sight. The earth which but a few days before had seemed ready to burst into fresh bloom was a dull and sodden brown. Not a stalk of grain, not a blade of grass, and not a flower could he see.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

What was the meaning of this? Had he been too sparing of the winds and rains? It might be so. His thoughts had indeed been upon other things. As rosy-fingered dawn appeared he sent a gentle wind to stir the trees, but no sign of buds appeared. He scattered sparkling raindrops on fields and meadows, but no green shoots brightened the dreary land.

The mist vanished as the sun, leaving the blue waters, rose in the brazen sky to shine upon the saddened earth. Zeus waited anxiously as its rays lightly touched the loftiest trees and the highest mountain peaks, for everywhere these were sacred to him, but a look of old age was upon them. He gazed more anxiously as the sun lighted the faces of mortals. Before his altars he saw them. The fragrance of their sacrifices came to him. With heads turned upward and hands stretched toward Olympus they sent their prayers to the father of gods and men. The purity of their hearts pleased the great Zeus, for this above all things he required of all his worshipers. Then was the great head bent to give ear to the prayers of mortals. He listened closely.

“Life, life, dear Zeus, to our fields, our plains, our groves! We hunger! We grieve! Have mercy!”

Then the father of gods and men saw the grief and despair in their hearts. Turning to the eagle, his favorite bird, which nestled at his feet, the great Zeus spoke:

“Great eagle, most favored of all creatures of the air,

ZEUS LOOKS DOWN FROM OLYMPUS

spread your wings. Seek Hermes, my messenger. Bring him before me.”

There was a whirring sound and a swift movement of the air. The great eagle rose and vanished into the grayness of the clouds.

In sadness the immortal king gazed upon the earth below. Where light and happiness had dwelt there was now darkness and mourning. The cause of this grief he must learn without delay.

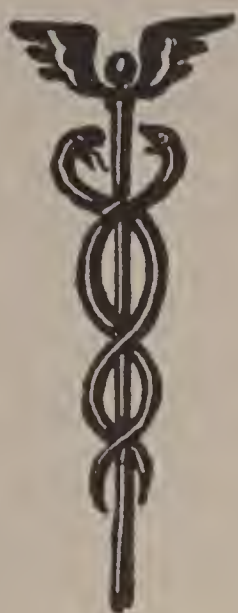
HERMES

*Foot-feathered Mercury appear'd sublime
Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropt
Toward the ground; but rested not, nor stopt
One moment from his home; only the sword
He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward
Swifter than sight was gone.*

KEATS

Hermes was called Mercury by the Romans.

CHAPTER II



HERMES, THE SWIFT-FOOTED MESSENGER

WITH circling flight, swift and sure, the eagle returned and Hermes stood before Zeus, beautiful, young, and full of strength. Hermes was the messenger of the gods. Fleet he was, with winged cap upon his head and winged sandals upon his feet. In his hand he carried his rod, his Caduceus, with wings, symbol of his swiftness, at the top, and two snakes, symbol of his wisdom, twined about it.

The great Zeus addressed him thus:

“Hermes, I came forth to look upon earth in the beauty of new life. I am sorely grieved at what my eyes behold. Instead of life, a look of death covers the earth. The sun has been following its daily course. I have sent gentle winds and sparkling rain. Tell me, Hermes, what is the meaning of this lack of fruitfulness?”

Hermes answered in his silvery-toned voice:

“Father, I know not. I have been in my palace working upon my flute. I would make the tones more

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

sweet. No message has taken me to earth. It is but now that I observe its sad condition. Think you, great Zeus, that someone could have stolen the seeds of Demeter (de mē' ter), giver of goodly crops?"

"Ah, swift Hermes, what god but you would think such mischief possible? Think you that for sweet mischief's sake some god would cause the whole race of man to perish from the stress of famine? No, no, Hermes, that could not be."

"Zeus, all wise one, if that be not true, then some one of the immortals is surely working a vengeance against the earth."

"That thought comes also to me. But what dire cause could so move one of the celestial gods?"

There was a silence while the great Zeus pondered. Then he spoke again:

"What of fair-tressed Demeter, giver of goodly crops? Has she knowledge of this?"

"Naught have I seen of Demeter for many days, most powerful Zeus."

"Go, swift Hermes, seek her in her Olympian palace on yonder hillock. Had she knowledge of this dread happening, surely she would have sought my aid. Make known to her that in vain have the oxen dragged the crooked plows through the furrows and that the white barley has fallen fruitless upon the land. Hermes, since you are in all things my messenger, go with the speed

HERMES, THE SWIFT-FOOTED MESSENGER

of light and summon Demeter to appear before me at once. I had thought to declare this a day of feasting and song, but it has become a day of fasting and mourning. I go in sadness to my palace. Let Demeter come to me there. Go, Hermes, and let nothing delay you.”

So Zeus spoke, and Hermes, the Guide, the Speedy-comer, did not disobey. Quickly he bound his beautiful winged sandals more tightly to his feet. These sandals of gold could carry him over flood and over boundless land swift as a breath of wind. He took flight and like an arrow he shot to the door of the palace of Demeter.

HERA

*The white-armed Juno there enthroned was seen,
Sovereign of heaven, and Jove's imperious queen;
Still near his queen her watchful peacock spreads
His thousand eyes, his circling luster sheds;
Where'er she bends the living radiance burns,
And floats majestic as the goddess turns.*

LOPE de VEGA

Hera was called Juno by the Romans.

A HOMERIC PALACE

*Brazen were the walls which ran this way and that
from the threshold to the inmost chamber, and round
them was a frieze of blue, and golden were the doors that
closed in the good house. Silver were the doorposts that
were set on the brazen threshold, and silver the lintel
thereupon, and the hook of the door was of gold. And
on either side stood golden hounds and silver, which
Hephaestus wrought by his cunning. . . . And within
were seats arrayed against the wall this way and that,
from the threshold even to the inmost chamber, and
thereon were spread light coverings finely woven, the
handiwork of women. . . . Yea, and there were
youths fashioned in gold, standing on firm set bases, with
flaming torches in their hands, giving light through the
night to the feasters in the palace.*

THE ODYSSEY

Butcher and Lang translation

CHAPTER III



HERA IN THE PALACE OF IVORY AND GOLD

THUS Zeus, to his palace of ivory and gold, walked slowly and with no joy in his footsteps. He entered the great hall, the meeting place of the gods. He sought Hera (Hē' ra), his wife, the queen of the celestials. As he stood looking about his beautiful hall, a smile came to his stern face. For a moment he forgot the grief which had come to earth.

There was a blaze of gold throughout the lofty room. Inlay of silver and amber, gold and ivory, gleamed in rare design. A sheen as of the sun or moon played on every wall and graceful column.

At one end of the high-roofed spacious hall sat Hera on her throne chair of shining gold awaiting the return of Zeus. Her eyes were large and beautiful. Her broad forehead gave her a look of majesty and nobility. Upon her head she wore a crown. It was of gold and richly wrought. Beneath it her hair fell to her shoulders in full waving tresses. Her chiton (kī' ton) was of gauzy

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

linen and delicately patterned. A loose cloak of closely woven fabric, bordered with purple, fell from her shoulders. Her messenger, Iris, whose garments trailing across the sky mortals called the rainbow, stood at her right hand. At Hera's left, her watchful peacock spread his shining circle of a thousand eyes. Lightly her hand rested upon his proud back. Hearing the footsteps of the great king, the Olympian queen raised her eyes and greeted him as he stood in the entrance.

A noble figure he was as he stood there. His beard was rich and flowing. The thick masses of hair rose from the high forehead and fell to his shoulders in clustering locks. His nose was large and finely formed. His slightly opened lips gave an air of kindness to his stern face.

With measured step the all-powerful Zeus walked to his golden throne chair which stood near that of his queen. Designs of great beauty shone from it, the handiwork of Hephaestus (he fes' tus), the craftsman among the gods. Upon its lower part there was a rest for the great god's feet. Here perched his eagle as Zeus seated himself. Upon a golden nail in the wall behind his throne hung his shield, called Aegis (ē' gis). There, too, hung his sheaf of thunderbolts. For them the great Zeus hoped there would be no need upon this day, though as he thought of earth's sad state he felt that with joy he could loose his thunderbolts and lash with light-



*"Still near his queen her watchful peacock spreads
His thousand eyes, his circling luster sheds"*

ning the enemy who had caused such disaster. Not without reason was he called Zeus, the Thunderer. Dark thoughts had returned to him. He took in his hand his scepter, the royal staff and emblem of his power.

Hera observed the look of brooding in Zeus' countenance. As her thoughts were ever upon the well-being of the children of mortals, she asked if any misfortune had befallen them.

"Queen of the immortals, I fear that no mortal young or old is free from misfortune today."

Then Zeus told her of the lack of fruitfulness upon the earth and of the grief and despair in the hearts of mortals.

In her white hand Hera held her scepter. Sadly she looked at the rainbird, the cuckoo, which was mounted upon it. This emblem of new growth to the soil was sacred to her. It was Hera's desire that rain and mist should at all times make fertile the fields of mortals. But, alas, of what avail were rain and mist if all fruitfulness had gone from the earth?

The door of the lofty hall opened suddenly and Hermes stood before them. With all haste and with no gladness in his voice he poured forth this tale:

"Most powerful Zeus and immortal Queen, give ear to my words. In vain have I sought Demeter in her Olympian palace. Naught is known of her there. Neither today nor in many days past has she been seen.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

As I winged my way back to you I paused to learn news of her from the other Olympian gods. From one pillared entrance to another I sped, seeking, questioning. Zeus, most powerful king, I know not the meaning of this, but gone are the celestials from their Olympian abodes!"

"Gone indeed!" Surprise appeared upon the noble countenance and then understanding.

"Surely the Immortals have gone to try their powers against this enemy who seeks to destroy the race of mortals. Alas," the great king continued sadly, "that I should have had no thought of the earth-dwellers these many days past. Deaf have I been to their cries."

Suddenly decision straightened the noble figure.

"Swift-footed Hermes, wherever the Immortals may be there you must find them." Sternly he spoke. "Summon them before me at once. A council of all the Olympian gods will disclose this hidden enemy. First summon Demeter, goddess of the harvest, that I may learn what she may know of this power which has destroyed her gift of life to the soil."

"Far-beholding Zeus, let me give counsel." Thus spoke immortal Hera. "Know you that Iris, my messenger, may carry divine commands with the speed of Hermes? Let her seek the fair-tressed Demeter and bring her before you. Then may the swift-footed Hermes carry with greater speed your summons to the other gods."

HERA IN THE PALACE OF IVORY AND GOLD

“Golden-throned Hera, whom all the Blessed throughout high Olympus honor and revere, it is wise counsel which you offer me. Let Iris be gone. Let her seek the ways of Demeter, and so may Hermes penetrate more quickly the depths of the sea, the paths of the forest, and the caverns of distant mountains. Let Poseidon (po si'don), my brother, god of the sea, be summoned first. Seek next Artemis, goddess of the hunt and of the moon, then fare swiftly over the wide earth until you come to the Chalybes (kal' i bēz)—Ares (ā' reez) will be there taking keep of the works of war. Let Athene (ath ē' nē), goddess of wisdom, be next to receive the summons, then Aphrodite (af rō dī' te), goddess of love and beauty, in whatever place they may be. Hephaestus, artist and craftsman, shall you seek in his loved workshop. Next fare you eastward and in his blazing palace seek Apollo, god of light. Then with swift flight return to Olympus and thence to the heart of my palace where will be found Hestia, before my hearth, ever its guardian and keeper.

And so the door of the hall flung wide and through it passed Iris of the shining wings and of the trailing rainbow garments, and Hermes of the golden wand and of the winged sandals. Forth they fared over the wide ways of the earth.

POSEIDON

*The sea-born Neptune there was pictured
In his divine resemblance wondrous like;
His face was rugged, and his hoary head
Dropped with brackish dew—his three-forked pike
He sternly shook and therewith fierce did strike
The raging billows, that on every side
They trembling stood, and made a long, broad dike
That his swift chariot might have passage wide,
Which four great sea-horses did draw, in team-
ways tied.*

SPENSER

Poseidon was called Neptune by the Romans.

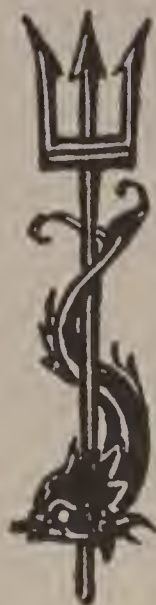
POSEIDON'S POWER

*He spake, and round about him called the clouds
And roused the ocean—wielding in his hand
The trident—summoned all the hurricanes
Of all the winds, and covered earth and sky
At once with mists, while from above the night
Fell suddenly.*

HOMER

Bryant's translation

CHAPTER IV



POSEIDON, RULER OF THE SEA

DOWN dropped Hermes, in less time than shoots the slanted sunbeam. He skimmed the earth like a bird. Soon he was above the dark blue sea. Like a gull he swooped over its waves. Poseidon, brother of the great Zeus and ruler of the realm of the sea, was to be summoned.

Hermes heard the song of the sirens as he flew along. The sirens were sea nymphs, with the upper part of the body that of a maiden and the lower part that of a sea bird. Wings were attached to their shoulders. Their beautiful voices and their sweet songs had a strange charm. Mortals listening to them fell into the sea to their death. No such power had they over immortals, and Hermes enjoyed their songs which sounded above the roaring of the waves.

Thetis, a sea nymph, silver-footed and fair-haired, rose from the deep and calmed the waters. Out from the deep to join Thetis came Galatea (gal a tē' a), another

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

sea nymph. Calling two white sea-horses from the foam, they mounted them and across the waters they were carried on some errand for Poseidon. Hermes wondered at the sadness in those faces which were usually so gay.

In the far west Hermes saw Atlas, who knows the depths of the sea and who holds the towering pillars which keep earth and sky apart. There Hermes saw him bearing on his strong head and strong hands the weight of the heavens.

A group of naiads (nā'yads), fresh from a visit to Poseidon, their king, swept swiftly over the waves of the sea. Their faces, too, were sad. They were nymphs of lakes and rivers, springs and fountains. In them they lived and to them gave life.

Signs of Poseidon's kingdom were on every hand as Hermes dipped swiftly through the crystal-smooth water to the ocean bed. His coming was so sudden that he frightened a flock of seals, tended by Proteus (pro'te us), son of Poseidon. Proteus had the gift of prophecy and the power of changing himself into any form he wished. It was his habit at midday to rise from the sea to rest. He slept on an island in the shade of the rocks. Around him lay his seals and the monsters of the deep. Those who sought him to learn of the future tried to catch him while he slept. But many tricks he played. He changed himself to every possible shape. One moment he was a lion with a billowy mane and



*Old Proteus smiled as Hermes appeared before them.
It was not often that he could be fooled . . .*



*When Hermes' desire to see Poseidon was made known,
Triton blew a sea-shell blast . . .*

POSEIDON, RULER OF THE SEA

next a tree with foliage green. Those who held him until he again took his own shape learned all that they would know, for then he answered all questions.

Hermes was also fond of sport and fun; so when he had frightened Proteus' flock of seals he hid himself from sight. Quickly Proteus became a seal and with his flock swooped through the waters to Poseidon's palace. Hermes knew that he went to give warning of a coming visitor. It pleased Hermes to think that he, a friend, had frightened Proteus, Wise Old Man of the Sea, as he was called. It pleased him, too, to visit Poseidon's realm. All about him was beauty.

The sparkling sand upon which he walked was dotted with jewels. The sunshine of amber mingled with the soft glow of pearls. On one side were rocks of pure crystal glistening with all of the colors to be seen in the trailing garments of Iris. On another side were groves formed of softly tinted coral. There were sea anemones of every hue. There were tall grasses which met and formed emerald caves and grottoes. There were fishes of varied forms and rainbow colors. In and out of the caves and grottoes they darted.

Then from afar shone Poseidon's palace of gold. It was of vast extent. The wash of the waters kept it glowing brightly. Lofty and graceful columns supported its gleaming dome. Everywhere played and danced the water nymphs.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Proteus, now in the form of a fish, darted forward to make sure that the visitor was a friendly one. With the speed of a lightning shaft he was back in his place at the entrance to Poseidon's palace. Triton, who was Poseidon's trumpeter, stood near holding a twisted sea shell in his hand. A blast on his sea shell trumpet might announce a visitor or stir up the waves of the sea.

Old Proteus smiled as Hermes appeared before them. It was not often that he could be fooled, even by one of the greater gods. When Hermes' desire to see Poseidon was made known, Triton blew a sea-shell blast, and the gates of pearl swung wide. Poseidon stood before them. This god of the sea was much like his brother, the great Zeus, in height and features, but his eyes were more bright and piercing. He seemed less kind than Zeus. His dark green hair waved in disorderly masses over his shoulders. In his hands he bore his golden trident. This was a fisherman's fork, a spear with three points and Poseidon's symbol of power. He used it to call forth and quell storms at sea. Sometimes, in anger, he struck huge rocks, causing the very shores to tremble. Mortals were ever anxious that he should think well of any journey which they might plan. No journey upon the sea was undertaken without sacrifices having first been made to Poseidon, ruler of the sea.

As Hermes saw Poseidon before him, he spoke in silvery tones:

POSEIDON, RULER OF THE SEA

“Hail, Poseidon! Hail, Ruler of the deep sea realms! I had thought to come to you today bidding you to a banquet of the gods—a joyous welcome to the fruitfulness of earth—but, alas, life has gone from the earth.”

Here Poseidon interrupted.

“Indeed, Hermes, I was about to visit Olympus to find the cause of the trouble which has fallen upon the earth. My streams which watered the plains and valleys find no green meadows sloping to them. My woodland springs, which caused bird and animal alike to rejoice, find no gladness in the forest. I have but now sent Thetis and Galatea over the earth to see if this day has brought any change.”

“It has, Poseidon,” Hermes answered, “but it is not a change for the better. For that reason I have come to you. Zeus summons you to appear before him at once. The cause of earth’s sad condition he knows not. A council of all of the greater gods is called so that he may learn what these Immortals know.”

“I go without delay,” Poseidon made answer.

Then, his work done, past the wonders of the ocean bed, through the crystal clearness of the water, one with the creatures of the deep, Hermes sped upward.

The god of the deep sea realm made ready to depart. Turning to Proteus, he said:

“Proteus, guard well my realm until my return from Olympus.”

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Then turning to Triton, he said:

“Triton, blow a sea-shell blast and let Amphitrite (am fi tri’ te) come before me that I may tell her of my going.”

When the sweet note was sounded, a voice was heard in song and fair Amphitrite, a sea-nymph, came riding in her silver shell. Two playful dolphins, the length of horses and with snouts like beaks, stretched the silken reins. Amphitrite guided them skillfully until she stood before Poseidon.

*O'er the green waves which gently bend and swell,
Fair Amphitrite steers her silver shell;
Her playful dolphins stretch the silken rein,
Hear her sweet voice, and glide along the main.*

DARWIN

Am fi tri’ te.

She was the wife of the ruler of the sea and so queen of the deep sea realm. In the palace she sat upon a throne at Poseidon’s side. With the fair Thetis she led the sea nymphs in their graceful dances.

Poseidon bade Amphitrite aid Proteus and Triton in keeping the realm of the sea in calmness until his return. Then calling his trumpeter he said:

“Triton, sound your trumpet and let my horses be brought before me.”

Before the echoes died away there was a swishing



*“He yokes to the chariot his swift steeds, with feet of
brass and manes of gold, and himself, clad in gold,*



drives over the waves. The beasts of the sea sport round him, leaving their lurking places . . .”

POSEIDON, RULER OF THE SEA

and swirling of the waters and there appeared four beautiful sea-horses with brazen feet and golden manes.

Poseidon's graceful chariot of intricate design, from the hand of Hephaestus, was brought forth. Amphitrite sent her dolphins off to sport and play while she helped Poseidon harness his steeds to his chariot.

Waving farewell to his queen he sped to the surface of the sea. Holding high his trident he bade the waters be calm. At once the rolling and the surging in his path ceased. The chariot moved with wonderful swiftness. It scarcely touched the waters. Monsters of the deep gamboled on either side.

Thus Homer sings of such a scene:

*He yokes to the chariot his swift steeds, with feet of brass and manes of gold, and himself, clad in gold, drives over the waves. The beasts of the sea sport round him, leaving their lurking places, for they know him to be their lord. The sea rejoices and makes way for him. His horses speed lightly, and never a drop touches the brazen axle.**

And so he sped along until the chariot left the waters and winged its way toward the cloudy heights of Mount Olympus.

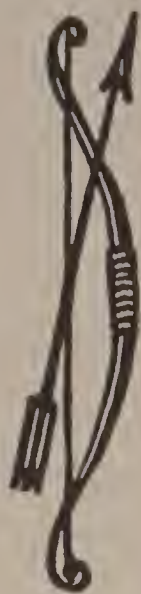
* Murray's Manual of Mythology.

ARTEMIS

Artemis of the golden Distaff, Goddess of the loud chase, a maiden revered, the slayer of stags, the archer, very sister of Apollo of the golden blade. She, through the shadowy hills and the windy headlands rejoicing in the chase, draws her golden bow, sending forth shafts of sorrow. Then tremble the crests of the lofty mountains, and terribly the dark woodland rings with din of beasts, and the earth shudders, and the teeming sea. Meanwhile she of the stout heart turns about on every side slaying the race of wild beasts. Anon when the Archer Huntress hath taken her delight, and hath gladdened her heart, she slackens her bended bow, and goes to the great hall of her dear Phoebus Apollo, to the rich Delphian land; and arrays the lovely dance of Muses and Graces. There hangs she up her bended bow and her arrows, and all graciously clad about she leads the dances, first in place, while the others utter their immortal voices in hymns.

HOMERIC HYMN
Andrew Lang translation

CHAPTER V



ARTEMIS, GODDESS OF THE HUNT

SO IS the story told in the Homeric Hymn to Artemis and so might Hermes have found her in the great hall of Apollo had all been well in the land of mortals. No thought had Artemis for the dance when the forests needed her.

Searching through her favorite groves Hermes found several of her huntresses resting upon the dry grass and a group of nymphs playing without joyousness beside a near-by spring. When Hermes told them that he had a message for Artemis, he learned that she was walking in the grove with the Muses. The Muses also loved the springs and limpid streams which gave them inspiration.

There was a soft crackling of dried twigs, and Hermes saw the goddess of the chase and of the moon, the revered Artemis, coming through the dark woodland. Her hair was knotted at the back of her head. Her robe was short, leaving her limbs free for the chase. Though a quiver was slung over her shoulder and a bow was

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

in her hand, she had sent forth no shafts of sorrow. Beside her walked a young stag, with soft eyes hungrily searching for food, and with no swiftness in the limbs which were wont to be so fleet.

The Muses, with graceful step and with soft robes flowing, followed offering comfort to the saddened goddess. In vain had they urged her to return with them to the hall of Apollo. Calliope (cal li' op e) walked nearest her, a stylus in one hand and a tablet in the other. She recited the most stirring of all her epic poetry, but there was only distress in the eyes of Artemis. Then Clio (cli' o), wrapped in rich folds of drapery, a wreath of dried laurel on her head, came forward.

"Fair Artemis," she said, "give ear." And in a sweet silvery voice she sang a sacred hymn.

But Artemis only shook her head. There was no comfort for her in the song. Nor would she listen to the sacred poetry of Polyhymnia (pol y hym' ni a). Erato (er' a to) came forward with her lyre and offered her songs of love. Again Artemis shook her head. Euterpe (yu ter' pe), wearing a garland of withered flowers, and bearing her flute, declared the world out of tune and did not offer to urge the Muses to song. Since she was the muse of harmony she felt her task too difficult upon this day. Terpsichore (terp sick' o re), who walked beside Euterpe, said that they must not fail Artemis. She came to the side of the goddess and played



*"She, through the shadowy hills and windy headlands
rejoicing in the chase, draws her golden bow,*



*sending forth shafts of sorrow. Then tremble the
crests of the lofty mountains . . .”*

ARTEMIS, GODDESS OF THE HUNT

upon her seven-stringed lyre. Her feet moved in rhythm to the music but no one followed her; then she knew that her art, the graceful dance, had no power to dispel the sadness that lay in the heart of Artemis.

Urania (u ran' i a) walked erect, her eyes on the heavens. She held in her hand a celestial globe. As the Muse of astronomy she longed to find the reason for the look of death upon the earth. Some curse had struck it but she knew not what.

Now Thalia (tha li' a), wearing a crown of withered wildflowers, offered first her pastoral poetry. When no interest was shown, she tried her art of comedy. Her comic mask she placed over her face, but the heads of all were turned from her. With a sigh she let the mask fall into her hands and Melpomene (mel pom' e ne), the Muse of tragedy, came forward. She wore a crown of gold and carried a dagger and a scepter. The tragic mask which she wore fitted well the mood of Artemis.

To see the trees which should bear young leaves, freshly green, looking as though a blight had come to them; to see the animals which were wont to sport and play looking hungrily for food; all this brought sadness to those who loved the forests.

Hermes looked at the group. Never before had he seen the Muses in so sad a state. With laughter and song and dance they brought joy to all who saw them, but today a blight had fallen upon them as it had upon

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

the world they loved so well. For once Melpomene was the leader of the group.

When Artemis saw Hermes, she greeted him sadly and said:

“Can you tell me what power is working against the earth? Though Zeus sends rains, the earth remains dry. Though I send dew no sign of it can be seen. Life has gone from the hills and valleys, from the groves and forests.”

“It is for that reason that I come, fair Artemis, goddess of the hunt and of the moon. A curse has fallen upon the earth. The reason must be found so that the children of mortals and the creatures of the forest shall suffer no longer. Zeus awaits you in his palace of gold.”

With these words Hermes was gone. Like a hawk he soared over the trees.

The nymphs, the huntresses, and the Muses who had been listening to Hermes' words rejoiced that the cause of their troubles had come to the ears of Zeus, the great lord of all.

Artemis warned them to save their rejoicing until her return. Then only would they be sure of the outcome.

Since evening would have fallen before her return, Artemis called for other garments, for she was also the moon goddess. Since moon was the symbol of night and since Artemis represented the power over the earth

ARTEMIS, GODDESS OF THE HUNT

at night, she was known as the moon goddess. She donned a long robe which fell in folds about her. On her fair brow she wore a crescent. A gossamer veil flowed gracefully behind.

So she called for her chariot. With a swirl of dead leaves a chariot of silver drawn by two milk-white steeds appeared before her. Taking her torch in hand, the mild and gentle queen of the night stepped into her moon car. With swiftness but quietly, as a moonbeam shines, she was drawn to Olympus.

*Goddess serene, transcending every star!
Queen of the sky, whose beams are seen afar!
By night heaven owns thy sway, by day the grove,
When, as chaste Dian, here thou deign'st to rove.*

BYRON

Artemis was called Diana by the Romans.

ATHENE

*I sing the glorious power with azure eyes
Athenian Pallas! tameless, chaste, and wise
Tritogenia, town-preserving maid,
Revered and Mighty; from his awful head
Whom Jove brought forth, in warlike armor dressed,
Golden, all radiant! wonder strange possessed
The everlasting Gods that shape to see,
Shaking a javelin keen, impetuously
Rush from the crest of aegis-bearing Jove;
Fearfully heaven was shaken, and did move
Beneath the might of the Cerulean-eyed;
Earth dreadfully resounded, far and wide;
And, lifted from its depth, the sea swelled high
In purple billows; the tide suddenly
Stood still, and great Hyperion's son long time
Checked his swift steeds, till where she stood sublime,
Pallas from her immortal shoulders threw
The arms divine; wise Jove rejoiced to view.
Child of the Aegis-bearer, hail to thee!
Nor thine nor others' praise shall unremembered be.*

SHELLEY

Tritogenia—(tri to ge ne' a)—name sometimes given to Athene. The river or Lake Triton or Tritonis was claimed as scene of her birth.

Athene was called Minerva by the Romans.

ATHENE AND ARES
IN CONFLICT

HERMES doubled his speed, for a long flight was before him. Over the land of the Amazons, the warlike women of the East, over mighty rivers and tall mountains he sped. When the clanging of a thousand anvils reached his ears, he looked below. Sparks were flying from the mountain side and Hermes knew that he had come to the Chalybes (kal' i bēz). Here were forged the weapons of Ares, the god of war, and here Hermes went to find this most fierce and most terrible of all the higher gods. The surging roar of the furnaces grew deafening as Hermes came to the entrance of the huge cave.

There stood Ares (a' reez), with all of his evil attendants, watching the smiths who never tire—who forge eternally, day and night, heating and hammering the metal into weapons of deadly strength.

Hermes called to Ares. Quickly Ares turned and came forward. He was of powerful build, but for a!

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

his great strength he moved with agility. In his right hand he bore a mighty lance. On his left arm he carried a round shield. He was surrounded by his usual attendants. Enyo, the war goddess, was on one side of him. Discord on the other. Alarm and Fear followed him closely, while Dread and Terror hovered behind. Vultures swooped and darted about, while the dogs of war tugged at their leashes and filled the heavy air with vicious barking.

“Why, O mighty Ares, do you prepare for war?” Hermes asked Ares.

“Have you not seen the condition of earth, swift-footed Hermes? I prepare my forces when signs of trouble appear.”

At this Enyo, the war goddess, uttered a loud cry, and Discord spoke:

“Surely, Hermes! And the signs of discord and contention are many!” She followed her words with high, cruel laughter.

Enyo, the war goddess, screamed, “Discord and contention! Discord and contention! They always come before war.” And a war cry sounded above the clanging anvils and the roaring furnaces.

“Ah, Ares, you are too ready to prepare for war without cause.” Hermes spoke sadly.

No wonder that Ares was not liked on Olympus, he thought. He loved war for war’s sake. It was his delight

ATHENE AND ARES IN CONFLICT

to pass through armies like a whirlwind destroying chariots and warriors alike.

“Cause enough, Hermes! Some power is destroying earth. What could it mean but war, and a war with mighty forces engaged! I must make ready.”

“What cause there is, powerful Ares, you are about to learn. Go at once to Olympus. Zeus, king of the gods, awaits you in his palace of gold.” With these words Hermes was gone.

Ares of the gleaming helmet, the shield bearer, clad in bronze armor, made ready to join the celestials in the palace of Zeus. All of his attendants clamored to go with him, but it was decided that only Discord should go. His chariot of gold drawn by two fiery steeds appeared at the entrance to the cave. With waving plume, with shining armor, with burning torch in hand, Ares started toward it, eager to be off, eager to find the enemy who was destroying the earth.

At that moment a shadow appeared at the entrance to the cave. Ares looked up and beheld Athene looking at him with accusing eyes.

Thus the Homeric Hymn* sings of her:

*Of fairest Athene, renowned goddess, of the
gray eyes, the wise; her of the relentless heart, the
maiden revered, the succor of cities, the strong*

* Tr. by Andrew Lang.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Tritogenia. Her did Zeus, the counselor, himself beget from his holy head, all armed for war in shining golden mail, while in awe did the other Gods behold it. Quickly did the Goddess leap from the immortal head, and stood before Zeus, shaking her sharp spear, and high Olympus trembled in dread beneath the strength of the gray-eyed maiden, while earth rang terribly around, and the sea was boiling with dark waves, and suddenly broke forth the foam. . . .*

All this and more Ares knew of Athene. He knew well how Zeus, her father, had brought her into being out of the black tempest-cloud, and amidst the roar and crash of the storm. Straight from his brow had she sprung, and since that time the wisdom and power of Zeus himself had been hers. It was she who saved the hosts in the midst of the works of war. It was she who labored that happiness and good fortune might be the share of mortals.

Ares knew why she looked accusingly at him. He knew that Athene was always a defender, never one to cause war. He knew, too, that his own love of battle often led him to encourage conflict. At such time he remembered how Athene in anger drove him before her

* The name Tritogenia was often given Athene because the river or the lake Triton was claimed as the scene of her birth.



*Let your thoughts be more upon justice than upon war.
Hurl not your torch without reason*

ATHENE AND ARES IN CONFLICT

with her lightning spear. Anger was in her eyes now as she looked at Ares in the midst of his warlike preparations.

“I feared that I might find you here, Ares,” she said in a voice clear and powerful.

“Indeed, Athene, goddess of wisdom, why should I not be here?”

“But you are here to prepare for war, Ares. I but now met Hermes, the swift-footed. His message from Zeus he gave to me. Fearing that you would answer the summons in warlike mood I made haste to find you.”

“Would you tell me not to urge war against a force that is destroying earth?”

“I would urge you to listen well, O Ares, to the counsel of the gods. Let your thoughts be more upon justice than upon war.”

“War and justice are one, O wise Athene, when an evil force is at work.”

“You are ever prone to think so, Ares. Go not to the council with your mind so fixed on thoughts of war. Remember that war brings grief and destruction. Hurl not your torch without reason; other ways may be found to remove the curse from the earth.”

Athene was ever one to counsel peace. In time of war her counsel was always wise, always on the side of right. When war was over she taught mankind to enjoy peace. She instructed them in all that gives beauty

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

to human life. She had invented the plow and was the first to instruct mortals in the art of spinning and weaving and, also, in working in metals. But her greatest gift to mankind was the olive tree—chief wealth of the land and true sign of peace and prosperity. Having put her thoughts upon inventions to make peace time a time of happiness for mortals, she was ever anxious that only a just cause should provoke war.

The fear that Ares should urge war when Earth's curse might be removed by other means had caused her to hurry to the lord of the chariot of war before he had had time to start toward Olympus. Now the gray eyes of the goddess Athene were troubled as she spoke to Ares.

“Let me not delay you longer. Go on your way and may wisdom be your guide.”

With these words the gray-eyed goddess passed through the opening of the cave and on magic sandals sped over trees, mountains, and valleys in swift flight to Olympus.

The evil attendants of Ares had stood quietly by while the goddess Athene was in the cave. Even they felt her power. But now that she was gone confusion broke out afresh. Cries of “War, war, war!” rent the air. Above the screaming, above the noise of the surging furnaces and the clanging anvils, Ares called to his attendants to remain in the cave until his return. He seized his plumed helmet and placed it upon his proud head. Then

ATHENE AND ARES IN CONFLICT

shouting to the smiths to double their speed, he advanced toward his waiting chariot. As he stepped into it he handed the reins to Discord who had followed and stood beside him and he charged her with the care of the chariot of war. Then like an arrow the fiery steeds sped through the opening.

Ares was on his way to join the council of the gods.

ARES

. . . *Thou plague of men,
Thou steeped in blood, destroyer of walled towns!*

ILIAD

Bryant's translation

Ares was called Mars by the Romans.

APHRODITE

*Look, look, why shine
Those floating bubbles with such light divine?
They break, and from their mist a lily form
Rises from out the wave, in beauty warm.
The wave is by the blue-veined feet scarce pressed.
The Beautiful is born; and sea and earth
May well revere the hour of that mysterious birth.*

SHELLEY

Aphrodite was called Venus by the Romans.

CHAPTER VII



APHRODITE ON HER SACRED ISLAND

AFTER giving his message to Ares, god of war, Hermes winged his way onward. Where might he find Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty? Perhaps, while he wandered over the wide ways of the earth, she had returned to her Olympian abode.

As he passed over the island of Cyprus he looked below. There he saw none other than Aphrodite herself, accompanied by the Three Graces, wandering sadly over the island of her birth.

Well did Hermes remember the day upon which Aphrodite was born. It was here, from the bubbling waters of the sea that she had risen, and as she shook her long fair hair the water drops had rolled down into the sea shell in which she stood and there became pure, glistening pearls. Then the strength of the west wind, moistly blowing, bore her amid soft foam over the waves of the resounding sea. So to the seagirt Cyprus was she carried.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Daintily she stepped upon the shore and where her feet trod, there the sand became a meadow rich and green. Wherever she looked, flowers of every shade and hue came to delight her eye. Varied colors and sweet fragrance charmed her senses. Then Hermes remembered how on that day the Seasons had gladly welcomed her, *and clad her about in immortal raiment, and on her deathless head set a well-wrought crown, fair and golden, and in her ears put earrings of orichalcum† (or' i kal' cum) and of precious gold. . . . Anon when they had thus adorned her in all goodliness they led her to the Immortals, who gave her greeting when they beheld her.* . . .* Much they marveled at her beauty. From that day her house was with the Immortals, but never did she forget the island of her birth. Seagirt Cyprus remained sacred to her.

All this Hermes remembered as he came to Cyprus, and well he knew the reason which had brought her there. When the curse of death had appeared on the rest of the earth, it had come also to Cyprus. The fair trees were withered to the ground, the meadow was arid, all color and freshness were gone from the land.

Upon this day, Aphrodite, from her home on Olympus, saw the look of death creep over her sacred island and a thought came to her. If there had been

* Homeric Hymns—Andrew Lang tr.

† orichalcum—a mixed metal precious to the ancient Greeks, with the color and luster of brass.



*"The bubbles break, and from their mist a lily form,
Rises from out the wave, in beauty warm"*

magic in her presence on seagirt Cyprus on the day of her birth would there not be the same magic in her presence today?

At once she called the Seasons before her.

“Deck me, kind Seasons, even as you did upon the day of my birth.”

Speedily the Seasons set to work. Each moment was precious to them, for no immortal could come or go from Olympus unless the goddesses of the Seasons drew aside the curtain of clouds which hid the home of the gods from mortal view. Since this was a sacred duty it was with nimble fingers that they decked the goddess of love and beauty. Then they gazed upon their work. The fair goddess looked even as she did upon the day of her birth. A garment of immortal fabric hung loosely from her shoulders and upon her immortal head was set a well-wrought crown. From her dainty ears hung earrings fashioned of precious metal and about her swan-like throat lay glittering chains. The Seasons were well pleased and, knowing her errand, bade her go quickly and try her power.

Calling the Three Graces, she told them to make ready to follow her.

*These three on men all gracious gifts bestow,
Which deck the body or adorn the mind,
To make them lovely or well-favored show;*

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

*As comely carriage, entertainment kind,
Sweet semblance, friendly offices that bind,
And all the complements of courtesy:
They teach us how to each degree and kind
We should ourselves demean, to low, to high,
To friends, to foes; which skill men call Civility.*

SPENSER

When the gracious three were ready Aphrodite stepped into her chariot formed of a single sea shell. Taking the silken reins in her hands she spoke gently to her snow white doves:

“Draw me quickly to seagirt Cyprus. Let no time pass before I set my foot upon the island of my birth.”

The reins straightened and as a sunbeam comes to earth, so swiftly was the chariot drawn to Cyprus. On magic sandals the Graces followed. Lightly Aphrodite stepped upon the sand. Anxiously she waited for the magic of life to return, but no flowers bloomed where she gazed, no varied colors, no sweet odors charmed her senses. Another step she took upon the sand, but dry and rigid it remained, and no life came to the hills. A great sadness took possession of her heart.

It was then that the winged messenger saw her. Dropping quickly to her side, Hermes spoke to her.

“I was about to seek you in your Olympian abode, fair Aphrodite.”

APHRODITE ON HER SACRED ISLAND

“I came here hoping, with my power, to save my sacred island from the curse which has been put upon all the earth,” she replied sadly, “but whatever curse this is, it is greater than my power.”

“Enter your chariot, fair Aphrodite, and go quickly to the palace of Zeus. A council of the gods will find both the reason and the cure for the curse upon the land.”

“Happy words are those, swift-footed Hermes. I go at once.”

Entering her sea-shell chariot and bidding the Graces follow, the goddess of love and beauty fared swiftly over the wide deep and the mountain peaks to the home of the lord of the dark clouds.

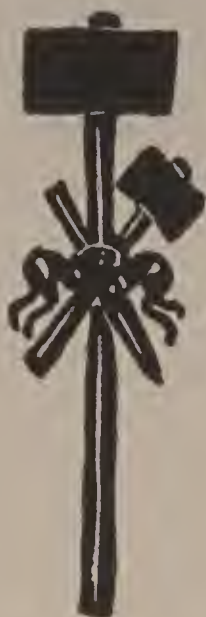
HEPHAESTUS

*Those who labor
The sweaty forge, who edge the crooked scythe,
Bend stubborn steel, and harden gleaming armor,
Acknowledge Vulcan's aid.*

PRIOR

Hephaestus was called Vulcan by the Romans.

CHAPTER VIII



HERMES VISITS HEPHAESTUS

THOUGH Hephaestus, artist and craftsman of the gods, had his palace upon Olympus, Hermes knew that he loved best his workshop in the heart of the mountain. As Hermes drew near he heard a booming and a roaring which told him that Hephaestus was hard at work in his smoky smithy in the deeps of the burning mountain.

“Hail, Hephaestus, artist of the gods,” he called as he reached the opening to the cavern. Hephaestus limped slowly toward him as he heard the call. His short chiton (ki’ ton) helped him to walk more freely and his pointed cap made him seem like a workman, but the dignity of his face proclaimed him a god.

Hermes looked about the cave. Near the forge two giant Cyclopes (si klo pēz), assistants to Hephaestus, were at work. Only for a moment did each giant turn his one huge eye toward Hermes, then he bent again to his clanging and hammering. The noise was deafen-

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

ing, but what could be seen brought gladness to the heart of the winged messenger. At a word of command from Hephaestus, the bellows, twenty in number, blew strong blasts upon the melting vats. Thereupon the great one-eyed giants cast upon the fire tough bronze and tin, precious gold and silver.

On jutting shelves of rock, on walls and all about the cave were objects of Hephaestus' skill. There were well-wrought bowls, some of gold with rims of silver, some with silver inlay of rare design. In these, Hermes knew, nectar would be served to the gods. On the sooty walls were shields of intricate pattern. On one shone emblems of the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars; on another, a fair city; while yet another bore the crests of mountains and grazing sheep. There were golden shoes for the immortals. With these they trod the air or water, and moved lightly, swiftly, between heaven and earth. There were horseshoes fashioned of brass. With these Hephaestus shod the celestial steeds which whirled the chariots of the gods through the air, over mountain and valley, sea and river.

A chariot of beautiful design stood on one side of the cavern, the body made entirely of gold, the eight-spoked wheels made of brass with rims of gold and hubs of shining silver. In this, some god would speed over the dark waters and over the wide ways of the earth.

On another rocky wall hung designs which had been



Two giant Cyclopes, assistants to Hephaestus, were at work. Only for a moment did each



*turn his one huge eye toward Hermes, then bent again
to his clanging and hammering*

HERMES VISITS HEPHAESTUS

used for the palaces of the gods on Olympus. All of these immortal abodes had been built by Hephaestus. For the great Zeus he had created a palace of shining gold and chased silver, and of gleaming ivory and burnished brass.

Many tripods stood about. Hermes knew these were gifts for the homes of the gods. Hephaestus was able to bestow upon his workmanship self-motion, so these tripods could move of themselves in and out of the celestial halls. With this great gift, Hephaestus had made two beautiful statues of gold which followed him about aiding him in his lameness.

“Hail, Hermes,” cried Hephaestus, “what errand brings you to my smoky cave?” A powerful, brawny man he was, and in his hand he bore a huge hammer.

“Hephaestus, immortal craftsman, a council of all the greater gods convenes upon Olympus today. Hasten at once to the palace of the great Zeus.”

“What cause?” asked Hephaestus.

Before Hermes could reply, through the entrance to the cave came Dionysus. The wreath of ivy which adorned his tresses hung dry and lifeless. Sadness covered the countenance which was wont to be so gay.

“What harm has befallen you, O god of happiness and mirth?” cried Hephaestus in great alarm.

“As you know, Hephaestus, the season of fresh growth in past years has always been a season of gladness and

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

joy, but, alas, this very hour when the grapevine should give promise of fruit, the sap of life has gone from it. Good Hephaestus, never before has the vine on your volcanic mountain failed to fulfill its promise of fruit. Know you the cause of this strange happening?"

Overcome by sorrow and weariness, Dionysus, the god of the fruit of the vine, god of mirth and joyousness, fell to the floor of the cave and dropped his head upon his arm.

"What means this, Hermes?" asked Hephaestus, "As you know I am never so happy as when I am in my smoky workshop. For many days I have labored preparing for a feast of the gods. New tripods for the banquet hall, golden shoes for the celestials, well-wrought bowls for the nectar—all these have I made. Much time has passed and nothing have I seen of the world outside. Speak, Hermes."

"Alas, Hephaestus, the joyous Dionysus speaks truly. It is for that cause you are summoned to the palace of Zeus. Make ready without delay. I must fare over the wide ways of the earth in search of Apollo, god of light and prophecy." With these words Hermes winged his way through the cave's entrance.

Aided by the golden statues Hephaestus made ready. Golden shoes gifted with motion were strapped to his feet. Then with his handmaidens, one on each side, he turned to Dionysus.

HERMES VISITS HEPHAESTUS

“Remain here, good friend, joyous news I will bring to you.”

No answer came from the stricken Dionysus, and sadly shaking his great head, Hephaestus started on his way. His golden handmaidens bore him smoothly and swiftly to the crests of fragrant Olympus.

APOLLO

*Bright-haired Apollo!—thou who ever art
A blessing to the world—whose mighty heart
Forever pours out love, and light, and life;
Thou, at whose glance, all things of earth are rife
With happiness; to whom, in early spring,
Bright flowers raise up their heads, where'er
they cling*

*On the steep mountain side, or in the vale
Are nestled calmly. Thou at whom the pale
And weary earth looks up, when winter flees,
With patient gaze; thou for whom wind-
stripped trees*

*Put on fresh leaves, and drink deep of the light
That glitters in thine eye; thou in whose bright
And hottest rays the eagle fills his eye
With quenchless fire, and far, far up on high
Screams out his joy to thee, . . .*

. . . oh, hear

Our hymn to thee, and willingly draw near!

PIKE

Apollo was called Apollo by the Romans.

CHAPTER IX



HERMES SEEKS PHOEBUS APOLLO

FAR to the east swift Hermes sped, for here was to be found the earthly home of Apollo. When he saw below him a palace of blazing light he dropped quickly before the golden gate at the entrance. It was from this palace that the sun chariot departed each morning upon its daily course across the sky. It was to this palace of blazing light it returned each night, borne across the sea in a golden bowl.

Hermes' knock was answered and he was taken before Apollo, god of the Silver Bow. Youthful, strong, beautiful was this god of light. His purple garments hung in cloud-like folds about him. His head was encircled by a wreath of laurel, and his long hair streamed down his shoulders like so many sunbeams. Behind him on the shining wall hung his silver bow. His lyre hung by a band across his chest.

When he saw Hermes he placed his lyre beside him and turned to hear the message.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

“Dear Apollo, god of the Silver Bow, god of light and prophecy, I bring a message from the great Zeus. He would have all of the gods come before him in his Olympian palace.”

“This, swift-footed Hermes, is not an unexpected summons.”

“Surely you who care for young kine; you, to whom all the cliffs are dear; you, who love the steep mountain crests and rivers running onward to the salt sea, surely you with your all-seeing eye may know something of the great trouble which has been put upon all the earth.”

“Good Hermes, inventor of the far-heard music of the reed pipes, and immortal herald, to you let me speak forth the truth. Something I do know of the trouble which has been put upon the tribes of earthborn men.”

“Then great service shall you render the council of the gods. Is there aught which I might know of this, Apollo, god of light?”

There was a silence. Then Apollo spoke thoughtfully.

“Hermes of the winged sandals, have you learned aught of Demeter, giver of goodly crops, as you fared over the wide earth?”

“It was not I, but Iris of the rainbow garments who was sent by Zeus to search for Demeter,” Hermes made answer.

“Know you whether or not Demeter obeyed the Olympian summons?”



*Apollo picked up his lyre and sang of the herds that
graze in the fields and of their suffering*

HERMES SEEKS PHOEBUS APOLLO

“I know not, good Phoebus Apollo. But, surely, the summons of Zeus, the Thunderer, could not be disobeyed.”

“Fare you onward to Olympus, swift Hermes, and there all that has happened shall be made known.”

“What of the Olympian summons to you, Apollo, god of light?”

“Swift Hermes, there is something which lies in the heart of Demeter alone, and there is something which lies in the mind of Zeus. There have been secret councils, and of these the eternal gods know naught.”

“Your words I hear, Apollo, but they bring me no meaning.”

“Their meaning you will soon learn in the immortal council of the gods.”

Apollo's thoughts seemed far away.

“Then you will come in answer to the summons of great Zeus?”

There was pleading in Hermes' voice.

Apollo made answer:

“The summons shall wait while I search for answers to the questions which trouble me.”

“Apollo, god of light and prophecy, your words fill me with foreboding. I shall delay my return no longer.”

Like an eagle Hermes soared toward many-ridged Olympus.

Apollo picked up his lyre and sang of the herds that

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

graze in the field and of the suffering the dead earth had brought them. He sang of the youth of mortals whose health and strength he guarded. Again he placed his lyre beside him as other thoughts came to him. Of what use would be his power of healing if field and tree gave no blessing to mortals? Of what use the gifts of the Muses if music and poetry were gone from the lives of mortals? Then in prophetic mood he saw the grief and suffering which would grow upon the wide earth if life and richness returned not to the soil.

Apollo arose and went forth into the open. There he saw Pegasus, the winged horse, where he awaited the return of the Muses. The beautiful animal searched among the dry grass to find a fresh blade to cheer and refresh him, but the ground was covered with dry stubble. Apollo sighed as he watched him. There had been nothing to bring joy to the winged horse for many days. No immortal mounted him to climb to misty heights. It was his joy to spread his wings and soar over tall mountains and vast seas. He waited to be called forth on joyous flight. He looked pleadingly at Apollo, whose favorite mount he was.

Apollo turned to the forest. Many animals were sacred to him. What of them? Hunger would come alike to the fierce wolf and the frightened mouse, to the he-goat and the ram, to the dolphin and the swan.

He thought of his goodly temple at the foot of snowy

HERMES SEEKS PHOEBUS APOLLO

Parnassus. Here mortals were wont to bring him rich gifts. Here mortals were wont to come seeking prophetic word from the great god Apollo. He bowed his head. No word of hope had he sent them. No light had he shed upon the dark future.

Then he summoned in haste his golden chariot. His silver bow and quiver he took in his hand. He called to his fleet horses and at the sound of his immortal voice they stretched forward like long winged birds, and with the speed of light, Phoebus Apollo was on the cloudy crest where dwelt the immortals.

HESTIA

Sacred to thoughts immaculate and pure.

YOUNG

Hestia was called Vesta by the Romans.

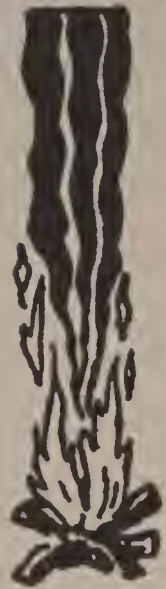
HESTIA'S FIRE

Whose sacred embers ne'er expire.

VIRGIL

Conington's translation

CHAPTER X



HESTIA BEFORE HER SACRED HEARTH

SWIFTER than thought Hermes was on Olympus. As the goddesses of the Seasons drew aside the curtain of clouds, he passed lightly to the palace of Zeus. In the very center of this mansion of burnished gold, chased silver, and gleaming ivory would be found the sacred hearth and here would be found Hestia, its guardian and keeper. For it was the desire of Zeus that Hestia, goddess of the hearth, should ever be found before this sanctuary in his great palace. It was his desire that she receive the choicest morsels of the feast, and from mortals, reverence as the oldest and worthiest of the gods.

Here Hermes found her standing with great dignity, her garments falling in loose folds about her. Here was Hestia, deity of the hearth, tending the holy fire.

Thus the Homeric Hymns sing of her:

Hestia, thou that in the lofty halls of all immortal Gods, and of all men that go on earth, hast obtained an eternal place and the foremost honor, splendid

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

*is thy glory and thy gift, for there is no banquet of mortals without thee, none where, Hestia, they be not wont first and last to make to thee oblation of sweet wine.**

With winged words Hermes spoke.

“Hestia, goddess of the hearth, come with me to the great hall of the palace. The king of all of the gods has called the immortals to appear in council before him.”

As the goddess turned at the sound of the silvery voice, Hermes saw sadness upon the noble brow. The pain in her voice as she replied caught at his heart.

“Swift Hermes, the prayers offered before the hearths of mortals are filled with grief.”

“Dear and honored Hestia, come without delay. It is for this reason the great Zeus has called a council of all the blessed gods. Come!”

“I come, Hermes, bringer of tidings, but not for long. My place is ever before this sacred hearth.”

Swiftly they moved from the hearth, the center of the palace, through halls, lofty and winding, to the entrance of the celestial gathering place. There Hermes paused. On thrones of gold the immortals were seated. The noble Zeus sat at one end of the spacious room with Hera, his queen, at his side. Then Hermes saw that four empty thrones remained in the shining circle. Hestia entered and took her place.

* Tr. by Andrew Lang.



In the very center of this mansion would be found the sacred hearth, and Hestia, its guardian and keeper

HESTIA BEFORE HER SACRED HEARTH

But what of the three empty thrones?

At that moment there was a blaze of light in the entrance, and Apollo stood beside Hermes.

“Have all of the immortals assembled, swift Hermes?”

“No one sits upon your golden throne nor mine—but there is one other, Apollo, god of prophecy.”

“Alas, I feared it would be so.”

These winged words Apollo spoke and then fared through the hall of Zeus. Before him the gods rose up all from their thrones as he drew near with his shining bow. Then from his mighty shoulders was taken the bow and quiver. Against the pillar beside the throne of father Zeus were they hung upon a golden pin. Then Apollo advanced to his throne, and as he sat in shining splendor the assembled gods gave him greeting and again sat upon their thrones.

The mighty head of Zeus turned toward Hermes.

“Swift-footed messenger, your work is well done, but naught has been heard of Iris.”

“Most powerful Zeus, then is Demeter not come?”

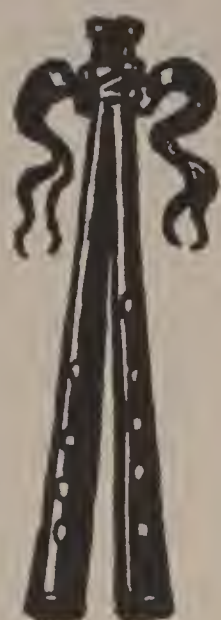
“Not only has Demeter not come, swift Hermes, but no word has come from her, nor from Iris, messenger of Hera, who was sent to summon her.”

Slowly Hermes, who was ever swift, went forward and sat upon his throne. Then all eyes were turned to the golden throne to which no immortal had come—the throne of the fair-tressed Demeter.

HECATE

*So shine out fair, O moon! To thee I sing
My soft low song: to thee and Hecate
The dweller in the shades, at whose approach
E'en the dogs quake, as on she moves through blood
And darkness and the barrows of the slain.
All hail, dread Hecate.*

THEOCRITUS
Caverly's translation



IRIS SEEKS DEMETER

WHEN Iris of the shining wings and trailing rainbow garments left the presence of Zeus, she passed to earth with slanting flight. Lightly she fared over the wide land but naught did she see of the fair-tressed Demeter. Only dying forests and fruitless fields were below her.

Then she came to a flock of sheep wandering over a brown meadow. Hungrily they searched for green blades of grass. Sadness caught at the heart of Iris. Near the sheep and seated at the top of a tall rock she saw Pan. Might not this god of the woods and fields, this god of flocks and shepherds know of the whereabouts of Demeter? Pan, the goat-footed, the two-horned, who haunts the wooded dells with dancing nymphs . . .

Lord is he of every snowy crest and mountain peak and rocky path. Hither and thither he goes through the thick copses, sometimes being drawn to the still waters, and sometimes faring through

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

*the lofty crags he climbs the highest peak whence the flocks are seen below; ever he ranges over the white hills, and ever among the knolls he chases and slays the wild beasts, the God, with keen eye, and at evening returns piping from the chase, breathing sweet strains on the reeds. . . . With him then the mountain nymphs, the shrill singers, go wandering with light feet, and sing at the side of the dark water of the well, while the echo moans along the mountain crest, and the God leaps hither and thither, and goes into the midst, with many a step of the dance. On his back he wears the tawny hide of a lynx, and his heart rejoices with shrill songs in the soft meadow where crocus and fragrant hyacinth bloom all mingled amidst the grass. They sing of the blessed Gods and of high Olympus, and above all do they sing of boon Hermes, how he is the fleet herald of all the Gods.**

Iris dropped beside the god, Pan, who ranges over the high white hills, who haunts the wooded dells with dancing nymphs, who returns piping from the chase, breathing sweet strains on the reeds. His goat's feet which were wont to be so gay rested softly in the dry grass. His goat's horns which flung about so gayly in the dance were without joyous motion. His pipes were

* Homeric Hymns—Andrew Lang tr.



*“At evening he returns piping from the chase, breathing
sweet strains on the reeds . . .”*

quiet in his hands. He looked at the flock of sheep, hungry in the meadow.

Iris spoke softly.

“Pan, god of sweet laughter, who makes glad the hearts of the immortals, tell me of fair-tressed Demeter. I seek her with summons from Olympus.”

“Iris, bright-winged messenger of Hera, I have seen the fair-tressed Demeter pass sadly over the hills.”

“Sadly, Pan? And did you have words with her?”

“Few words, Iris, but a dark veil was cast about her shoulders, and a torch was in her hand and when greeting I gave, she spoke, and asked if I knew aught of Persephone (per sef’ o ne), her fair daughter.”

“O Pan, god of the wooded hills, maker of sweet music, I must be gone. I seek Demeter and if grief has come to her then is the need to find her greater than I knew.”

Sadly Pan remained at the foot of the tall rock while Iris winged her way onward. With keen eyes searching she sped over the wide valleys, once heavy with corn, over high hills where flocks were wont to munch the green grass. There came a whining and a howling of dogs and below her Iris saw Hecate (hec’ a te), three-fold goddess of earth, heaven, and the lower world, coming forth from a rocky cavern.

She followed her way to the crossroads, her three forms looking the three ways. There she waited to

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

practice her cunning, her sorcery, her witchcraft. Iris dropped beside her as she stood there gloomy, filled with dark thoughts, bearing torches in her hands.

“Hecate of the shining headdress, have tidings of the whereabouts of Demeter come to you?” Iris asked of the gloomy one.

“I have seen Lady Demeter, messenger from Olympus,” the voice came in reply heavy with foreboding.

“Tell me of her and where I may find her,” Iris urged in haste.

Then were the three forms of Hecate shaken with groans.

Iris begged of her to cease her lamenting and tell what she knew of Demeter.

“’Twas I who heard the cry. ’Twas I who heard the cry.” Hecate groaned.

Then Iris tried to calm Hecate and begged her to tell whose cry it was she had heard.

“The cry of Persephone when she was borne away,” Hecate answered.

“Who is it, Hecate, who has borne Persephone away? Who is it of gods or mortal men?”

“Though I held my torches high I could not see the guilty one.” And Hecate’s sorrow broke forth once more.

“Tell me, Hecate, what has become of Demeter?” Iris asked.

Then Hecate in a voice heavy with grief told how

IRIS SEEKS DEMETER

Demeter had come to her and how with burning torches held high they had fared over land and sea, over snowy crest and soft meadow searching for the lost Persephone, and how none had told them of the child.

“And now in fragrant Eleusis, Demeter sits apart from all the blessed gods, her heart filled with bitterness.”

Her tale ended, Hecate disappeared. A loud barking of dogs came to the ears of Iris. Then quickly, with rainbow garments trailing behind her, the messenger sped over hill and meadow, over sea and mountain crest until she came to the citadel of fragrant Eleusis.

DEMETER SEEKS PERSEPHONE

*What ails her that she comes not home?
Demeter seeks her far and wide,
And gloomy-browed doth ceaseless roam
From many a morn till eventide.
“My life immortal though it be,
Is naught!” she cries, “for want of thee,
Persephone—Persephone!”*

INGELOW

Demeter was called Ceres by the Romans.



DEMETER SITS APART

TO THE temple of the citadel of fragrant Eleusis Iris sped. There she found Demeter clothed in dark raiment, mourning the loss of her daughter.

In winged words Iris spoke to her:

“Demeter, goddess of the harvest, I come to you with immortal summons. Zeus, the greatest and most powerful, bids you return to the tribes of the eternal gods.”

Demeter did not rise from the place where she sat, nor did she speak.

Iris came nearer to the dark figure with bowed head and addressed her again.

“Come, Demeter, loved of all the immortals, come, that the word of Zeus may prevail over mortal and immortal alike.”

“Iris, fair messenger of Hera, you speak lightly. What do you know of a mother’s sorrow? And these many days I have been without word from Olympus. I have been forgotten while my heart has been filled with pain.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

No immortal from Olympus has come offering help in my grief, no bird of the air has sought me with soothing message. I have been forgotten indeed. Now you come and bid me rise hastily and answer the call from Olympus.”

“Demeter, I am indeed come with message from Olympus. Come with me and all wounds may be healed in the immortal council.”

“Iris, your heart is warm and it is your desire that all should be well, but, gentle messenger, can the immortal council bring back to me my beloved daughter?”

“Demeter, bringer of fruit to the earth, that I can not answer, but this I know, the word of Zeus must prevail!”

Though Demeter made no answer, she lifted her head and gazed at Iris with eyes in which such sadness lay that the messenger was moved to pity and begged of Demeter to tell more of her sorrow.

Then sadly her tale she told.

“Over the wide earth and the teeming sea I sped in search of Persephone, but no one, mortal or immortal, has told me all the truth. I stood before the car of Apollo, god of light, and begged him to look upon me with pity. Surely he would know all, I thought, Apollo, whose rays of light may shine upon every mountain and valley and upon earth and sea alike. And so I asked him who it was who had taken Persephone against her will. Her voice had come to me shrilly entreating and though I



*"The seed of the corn and the seed of the white barley
shall fall fruitless on the land, for earth shall*



*not send up her grain nor shall the sap run in vine or
tree until my eyes have looked upon Persephone"*

had sought her over the wide ways of the earth yet naught had I learned of her.”

“Ah, Demeter, surely Apollo told you what truth he knew.” Iris was moved by the telling of Demeter’s sad search.

“Listen well to the tale,” Demeter replied. “Apollo answered my plea in this manner: ‘Queen Demeter, I do pity you in your sorrow and you shall know all the truth. The great Zeus, the king of the gods, the gatherer of the clouds, gave word to Pluto, his brother, that Persephone should be his queen, and Pluto came forth from beneath the earth driving his sable horses, seized Persephone and carried her in his chariot beneath the dusky gloom. Her voice rent the air and the mountain peaks rang with her entreaties, and now you know it was her voice which came to your ears.’ Thus he spoke to me.”

Iris waited for the unhappy goddess to continue.

“Then, O Iris, did Apollo reason with me in this way: ‘Goddess, do not lament, do not hold anger in your heart, for Pluto is no unseemly lord for your daughter. Is he not fair owner of all the wealth that is in the earth? Remember, so that your grief may abate, that when all the universe was divided into three parts, Pluto won the kingdom beneath the earth for his own, a fair third of all that is, and there he is king!’” Demeter bowed her head as she finished the tale.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

“Ah, good Demeter, there is truth in his pleading.” Iris spoke softly, but the bitterness in the heart of Demeter answered her:

“Shall the gods hold secret council and take from the goddess of the harvest all that is dear to her? Shall the days pass and the nights while the joys of ambrosia and sweet nectar are denied her, while cooling waters do not refresh her, while she seeks with burning torches that which is dearer to her than her immortality, and naught but silence come from Olympus in answer to her cry? Listen well, Iris, winged messenger from Olympus.” And the head of Demeter was lifted, and the voice of Demeter was firm, as she said, “The seed of the corn and the seed of the white barley shall fall fruitless on the land, for earth shall not send up her grain nor shall the sap run in vine or tree until my eyes have looked upon my Persephone.”

“Ah, Demeter, do not harden your heart against the immortals. Surely the great Zeus meant happiness to result for all.” And the voice of Iris trembled. Demeter’s bitter words filled her heart with fear.

To this, Demeter made no answer.

“Come, Demeter, let us join the council of the immortals. Surely justice will be done when all is known upon Olympus.”

Still there was no reply from the holy Demeter.

“Blessed Demeter, know you that the tribes of earth-

DEMETER SITS APART

born men may perish from the stress of famine if you return not to the council of the immortals?"

No reply came from the dark-mantled goddess. Slowly Iris spread her shining wings, and no word stayed her going. Then with bright-hued garments trailing across the sky, she sped through the space between earth and heaven. Sadness filled her heart.

AND THE GODS WENT FORTH

Thereafter the Father sent forth all the blessed Gods, all of the Immortals, and coming one by one they bade Demeter return, and gave her many splendid gifts, and all honors that she might choose among the immortal gods. But none availed to persuade by turning her mind and her angry heart, so stubbornly she refused their sayings.

HOMERIC HYMNS
Andrew Lang translation

CHAPTER XIII



THE GODS BID DEMETER RETURN

SO IRIS came to many-ridged Olympus. Through the folds of clouds, through the golden doors of the palace of Zeus she passed, and she stood in the entrance to the great hall where waited the Immortals. The blaze of splendor was so blinding that for a moment Iris stood without seeing. Then the voice of Zeus came to her, bidding her let Demeter enter at once.

Then sight came to Iris but not speech, for the eyes of all the celestials were upon her. The power and wonder of them left her without strength. Again Zeus spoke to her telling her not to stand silently, but to bring Demeter before him.

At last speech came to Iris.

“Most powerful Zeus, Demeter sits apart in the fragrant Eleusis and will not come to the council of all the blessed gods.”

Then did Zeus speak in a voice of thunder and all Olympus trembled.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

“Shall the summons of Zeus be disobeyed? Shall the goddess to whom the great Zeus has given honor spurn his commands?”

All of the immortals held silence until the anger of the great Zeus should abate, then did they all demand to know of this honor which had come to Demeter.

And so the great father spoke again.

“Listen well. The time had come when a queen was to be chosen for one of the three great kingdoms, the kingdom of the lower world, the kingdom of Pluto, giver of all the blessings that come from the earth, powerful monarch of the realms of the dead. Much did I ponder the choice of this queen. My decision must be filled with wisdom, and I allowed no thoughts of other matters to befog my mind.

“The queen of this realm must be beautiful and gay—a bringer of light and joy to the dark palace beneath the earth. I bethought me of Persephone, fair daughter of Demeter. For is she not beautiful and gay, a bringer of light and joy? And, also, is not Demeter deserving of honor? Is she not a giver of all good things? So was my choice made. So did the joyous Persephone become the queen of the lower world, the guardian of all the richness beneath the earth and queen of the realm of the dead.”

For a moment there was silence among the celestials, then the voice of Apollo was heard.

THE GODS BID DEMETER RETURN

“Immortal father, sharp pain caught at the heart of Demeter when she heard the mountain peaks ring with the cry of Persephone. For Pluto stole her daughter away all unwillingly, nor told Demeter of her going, nor of the plans of the great Zeus. Many days did the sad Demeter seek in vain. Then she came and stood beside my chariot and questioned me. Only then did she learn tidings of her daughter. Though I spoke of the honor to Persephone, she gave no ear to my words.”

The great Zeus pondered and then made answer:

“God of light, the truth of your words pierces my heart. Alas, that my summons to the goddess was of no avail, for Demeter must join our council.”

After a great silence Zeus spoke again:

“Then shall all the immortals go forth, save Hestia, alone. Let her remain near the sacred fire. One by one shall you bid Demeter return to us. One by one shall you offer her splendid gifts from what store you have. What honors she may desire, those shall she choose. Do not delay—but go so that you may more quickly bring Demeter before me where I wait.”

And the gods went forth. White-armed Hera stepped lightly into her chariot, brazen-wheeled, with plait-work of gold and silver thongs. Her fleet horses, golden-yoked, Iris swiftly put to the car. Athene, with her robe, many-colored, woven by her own hands, cloud-like in the air, sped after the gleaming car. Then brazen Ares entered

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

his chariot, where it waited, Discord holding the reins, and pressed forward. Came Poseidon, the Earth-shaker; Hermes, the swift; Hephaestus, in the pride of his great strength, borne by golden servants; Artemis, the Archer; Apollo of the shining locks, and Aphrodite, the laughter-loving.

In shining procession did they descend in slanting flight.

Faring swiftly over the wide earth and the teeming sea they came to the fragrant Eleusis. One by one they bade Demeter return. One by one they gave splendid gifts, immortal, from their rich store. One by one they offered her Olympian honors, whatever she might desire.

To all, the dark-mantled goddess gave reply from the bitterness in her heart.

“Nevermore shall I enter fragrant Olympus, and nevermore shall earth bear fruit until my eyes behold my fair-faced daughter.”

Then the shining procession sped back to Olympus and carried these tidings to the great Zeus, where he awaited them.

When the far-seeing Zeus, the lord of the loud thunder-peal, had heard these tidings, he turned to Hermes, the god of the golden wand, the winged messenger, and spoke these words, and there was a weariness in his voice:



Speedily he went forth beneath the hollow places of the earth while the celestials waited in the great hall

THE GODS BID DEMETER RETURN

“Since wisdom and justice must be at the heart of every thought and every act, let Themis, goddess of justice, be summoned.”

Themis was never far from the throne of Zeus, for her advice was needed always when the affairs of men or gods were to be settled. No sooner had Hermes gone in search of her than he returned with her beside him. In one hand she held a sword and chain, for her decrees were severe when the offense deserved it. In the other hand she held a balance, for her decrees were just. She was indeed the goddess of law and justice. She took her place beside the throne of Zeus and turned her large open eyes toward the great father as she waited for him to tell of his need for her.

In winged words all was told. She nodded her sage head and spoke:

“A mighty matter this to come before the council of the gods. Proceed, father Zeus. By your side I shall stand and no thought which is not just may come to you.”

Then the great Zeus turned again to Hermes and a new firmness was in his voice.

“Go, Hermes, seek Pluto in the underworld. With soft words persuade him to bring up the holy Persephone into the light, that her mother may behold her, and that her anger may relent.”

Then Themis, goddess of justice, turned to Zeus.

“Most powerful Zeus, do you now call to mind the

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

great law of Pluto's kingdom—"He who tastes food in the realm of the dead may never again live upon the earth or in the heavens above." "

A dark silence fell upon the gathering of the immortals, then Zeus spoke:

"Is it not true that Persephone cried out protesting when Pluto bore her away in his golden chariot? Is it not true that if bitterness filled her heart at her going she will have no wish to stay in the dark underworld? Surely then she will not be forgetful of the law of Pluto's kingdom."

Then the immortal gods were filled with awe. Persephone, all youth and joyousness, would she remember the great law? Would she, in her hunger, remember this penalty?

"Zeus, father of all, it may now be too late. Surely one so young, so full of life, could not resist the food with which Pluto would be sure to tempt her," said Athene sadly.

With slow voice the great father replied:

"Then Persephone, fair daughter of Demeter, shall no longer have her abode with the immortal gods on cloudy Olympus, but shall dwell forever beneath the dark hollows of the earth."

The brilliant light which clothed Apollo seemed dimmed as he said:

"Demeter's heart is filled with a great bitterness and

if all this comes to pass her anger will not lessen but will increase.”

Then the hearts of the immortals were heavy with foreboding. If Demeter's anger did not lessen, the dwellers of the earth would perish and the gods that hold mansions on Olympus would know no more of the sweet sacrifices offered by mortals. Even the warlike head of Ares was bowed. Of what avail his thunderbolts against the power of Demeter? They had power to destroy life on earth, but they had no power to restore life to the earth.

Zeus turned to his winged messenger and said:

“Delay no longer.”

And Hermes disobeyed not the commands of Zeus, but straightway and speedily went forth beneath the hollow places of the earth while the celestials waited in the great hall of Zeus. They waited and knew at last the cause of the grief which had fallen upon the world. They waited and knew that with all their combined powers the earth-dwellers might perish and leave the gods without usefulness and so without joy in their immortality.

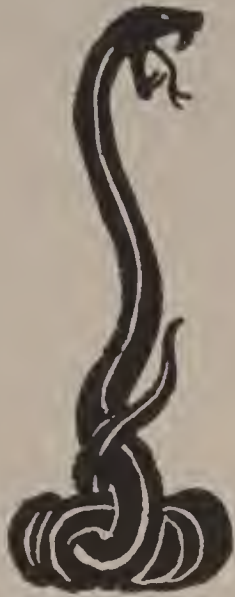
THE KINGDOM OF PLUTO

*What sounds were heard,
What scenes appeared,
O'er all the dreary coasts!
Dreadful gleams,
Dismal screams,
Fires that glow,
Shrieks of woe,
Sullen moans,
Hollow groans,
And cries of tortured ghosts.*

ADDISON

Pluto was called Pluto by the Romans.

CHAPTER XIV



HERMES GOES TO PLUTO'S KINGDOM

WINDS singing along the wine-dark sea sped Hermes on his way. The path he followed now he knew full well, for was he not the guide who led the shades of the dead to the kingdom under the earth, the kingdom of Pluto?

As Hermes came to the wide-gated entrance, the willow trees drooped sadly and a sighing came from the silver poplars. With his Caduceus he knocked against the heavily barred gate.

A bark, thrice repeated, answered him.

“Down, Cerberus,” he cried to the three-headed dog which guarded the entrance into the underworld. Well did Cereberus know the voice of Hermes, and the gate swung wide. He entered and walked in darkness. Cries and groans came to him from all sides. Sounds of swishing waters made him pause.

Before him he saw the river Styx (stiks) which flowed nine times around the underworld. On its banks old

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Charon (ka' ron) sat in his boat waiting to take to the other side the shades of the dead. A host of eager spirits pressed forward to claim a place in the boat.

“Have you the ferryman's fare?” cried Charon in a terrible voice.

Some answered yes, and those Charon took across a few at a time. Some cried no, and though they told Charon that those who loved them had only forgotten to send the ferryman's fare of one obolus (ob' o lus), yet was he merciless.

“For one hundred years shall you shiver on these dread shores,” was his answer.

But Hermes sped on. He passed the tribunal of Minos, where the spirits learned whether their actions on earth had earned for them happiness or misery.

The wicked were sent into torment. Dire monsters waited to take vengeance upon all those earth-dwellers who had not obeyed the laws of man and of their gods. The Furies seized them and scourged them with their whips. They dragged them over fiery floods to the awful gates of Tartarus into whose horrible depths they were hurled as the brazen gates swung open. Here they found the dread Titans who had been driven to these depths by the dwellers on Olympus. Here they found the Danaides (dan a' i deez), the fifty daughters of that cruel king of Argos who had decreed that they should kill their husbands that no one of them might take from



*"Down, Cerberus!"—Well did Cerberus know the voice
of Hermes, and the gate swung wide*

HERMES GOES TO PLUTO'S KINGDOM

him his throne. Here the forty-nine who had obeyed the wicked father were doomed to draw water to fill a large cask. But, alas, the cask was filled with holes, and so the wicked daughters were doomed to follow one another in sad procession bearing water forever and forever. Great tears fell from the dwellers in Tartarus and they rolled into salt waves and grew into the great, black river of Lamentation.

Those who had lived nobly or with great courage passed to the Elysian Fields. Here they found a land of eternal spring. Here they found sunlight, happiness, and song. Here they drank of the river Lethe (le' the), the river of forgetfulness, and lived pleasantly with the dwellers in this fair land. The warrior found horses, a chariot, and armor awaiting him; the musician found pipes and a lyre; and for the hunter a quiver and a bow. Whatever they had loved on earth they found awaiting them in the pleasant Elysian Fields.

Here, before the tribunal of Minos, Hermes saw the shades of the dead following the two paths. Shrieks filled with dread and woe came from the followers of the path to Tartarus, while gentle singing came from those who followed the path to the Elysian Fields.

And now Hermes passed the meadows of Asphodel where dwelt the shades of those poor mortals who had not lived greatly and yet who had never done any wicked deed. Here wandered these dull shades surrounded by

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

bushes to which no buds came, vines which never bore fruit and trees which knew no leaves. Here they wandered like weak ships in a wind, driven here and there, knowing no port.

Now the dark palace loomed grim and forbidding in the distance. On every side were signs of Pluto's wealth. Metals shone among the rocks, and gems of brilliant hue brought some cheer to the gloomy way.

The golden doors of the palace opened, and Hermes passed the three Fates, sisters, near the throne of the god of the underworld, whom they served. The youngest spun the thread of life and mingled it well with brilliant and dull colors. The second sister twisted it so that it was strong here and weak there; joy and woe, hope and fear mingled together. The third sister sat with shears in hand. Grimly she watched the thread growing. Hermes paused. Suddenly she reached forward and with a quick motion severed the thread. In a dreadful voice she spoke.

"Prepare to meet one who comes to dwell in our realm."

Hermes passed on and stood before the throne of Pluto. And upon this throne sat the grim lord of the underworld, all clad in sable robes, and there, beside him, and upon another throne sat Persephone. Near her and about her a light seemed to glow, a light which lifted somewhat the gloom of the beautiful hall.



“Have you the ferryman’s fare?” cried Charon in a terrible voice. Some answered yes . . .



Some cried no. "For one hundred years shall you shiver on these dread shores," was his answer

HERMES GOES TO PLUTO'S KINGDOM

The walls of this hall of the god Pluto were set with the precious gems of the earth. Rubies and emeralds tried in vain to rival the light shed by the youth of the fair Persephone.

Hermes drew near and spoke:

“Pluto of the dark locks, Prince of the shades of the underworld, giver of the wealth which is in the earth, father Zeus bade me bring Persephone forth that her mother may behold her.”

The face of Pluto was dark and stern. On his head he wore his magic helmet. This made Hermes know that Pluto had some thought of trouble, for this was the helmet made by the one-eyed giants, the Cyclopes, workers in Hephaestus' workshop. With this on his head Pluto could appear or disappear at will. In his hand he held his scepter.

“Ah, Hermes, guide and speedy-comer, is not the mother of the fair Persephone pleased that her daughter rules over all the wealth which is in the earth?”

“Not pleased, powerful Pluto. Instead she has conceived a great anger against the Immortals. She sits apart wearing a dark mantle and will not join their councils. Now she plans a mighty deed, to destroy all that lives on earth, man and plant alike, by withholding the seed from the earth.”

“Then go, Persephone, to your dark-mantled mother, go with a gentle spirit in your breast. Though I am

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

saddened, though joy and light go from my abode and from my heart at your going, yet am I no unseemly lord. Am I not brother to Zeus, king of the immortals? And you, Persephone, remember that over all that dwells in this realm, and over all the riches which lie buried in the earth, you are the queen. Among the Immortals honor and renown shall be yours.”

So did Pluto speak, and wise Persephone was glad. Joyously she arose from her golden throne.

Then did cunning thought come to Pluto. In vain had he tried to tempt Persephone with rich foods. In vain had choicest morsels been placed before her, but ever was she conscious of the great law of the lower world. Now in her gladness at the thought of seeing her sorrowing mother might she not forget? In her sadness at leaving the lonely god of the underworld might she not have it in her heart to please him? Stealthily he took a pomegranate, small and withered, which lay on a tripod near-by. Stealthily he took it to the fair Persephone. Great care he took that Hermes should not see his act. Quickly he offered it with pleasant word, this fruit from the world above. And Persephone, all forgetful of its meaning, all gladness at her going, ate of it, and knew not what she did.

Then did Pluto make haste, in his heart rejoicing at what he knew. The golden chariot was summoned and readily did Persephone climb into it. Beside her stepped

HERMES GOES TO PLUTO'S KINGDOM

Hermes who took reins and whip in hand. Then the fiery-mouthed steeds, all gloomy-black of coat, gladly sped from the halls. And from the Homeric Hymns we read that:

*Speedily they devoured the long way; nor sea, nor rivers, nor grassy glades, nor cliffs could stay the rush of the deathless horses; nay, far above them they cleft the deep air in their course.**

And Pluto, who stood in his dark entrance, watched the golden chariot until it could no longer be seen. His face so stern, so forbidding, had on it a look of one who holds in his heart a secret, golden and triumphant, and is made glad thereby.

* Andrew Lang tr.

THE PRAYER OF MORTALS

*Arise and set the maiden free;
Why should the world such sorrow dree
By reason of Persephone?*

INGELOW

CHAPTER XV



DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

SWIFTLY to the fragrant Eleusis sped the sable horses and the golden chariot. And Hermes checked them not until they stood before the place where Demeter sat apart from the gods. When she beheld them, she rushed forth to greet her daughter, for whom she grieved and for whom she waited. Persephone rejoiced to see her mother, so in oneness of heart did they cheer each other. Their minds ceased from sorrow, great gladness did each give the other.

The dark veil was pushed back and youth and beauty came to the one who had felt aged with grief. Words came to the one who had sat long in silence and in sorrow. Smiles came to the lips which had been long smileless.

Seeing Hermes waiting beside the chariot, Demeter spoke to him:

“Some gracious gift I would bestow upon you, good Hermes. To me you have brought happiness which had seemed lost forever. You were courageous indeed to go

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

to the god of the underworld and take from him that which he thought belonged to him. The god Pluto is not without power.”

“What I asked of the god Pluto he gave to me without bitterness. Demeter, goddess of the soil, one gracious gift I ask, and only that. Answer the summons to the immortal council with all seemly speed.”

“Hermes, be patient. Tarry here while I listen to the words of Persephone. She has much to tell me.”

Then with arms twined about one another, and hearts filled with joy, Demeter and Persephone talked together.

Demeter begged to learn how all had come to pass, how such sorrow had come to her, and Persephone gladly told the tale.

“It was on a fair morning that I went forth with the friendly nymphs of the sea.

“We were playing in the lush meadow, dancing hither and thither plucking lovely blossoms. Crocuses were there and hyacinths, roses, and lilies. Then did I see a narcissus plant blooming wondrously.

From

its root grew forth a hundred blossoms, and with its fragrant odor the wide heaven above and the whole earth laughed and the salt wave of the sea. . . . Gladly was I gathering them when the earth gaped beneath, and therefrom leaped the mighty Prince, host of many guests, and he bore me against



*"Gladly was I gathering them when the earth gaped
beneath, and therefrom leaped the mighty Prince,*



*host of many guests, and he bore me against my will,
despite my grief, beneath the earth . . .”*

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

*my will, despite my grief, beneath the earth, in his golden chariot; and shrilly did I cry.**

“Dear daughter, it was that cry, ringing over the mountain peaks and across the wide seas, which came to my ears.”

And Persephone told more of her story.

“So long, dear mother, as I beheld the earth and the teeming sea beneath me, so long hope warmed my heart. It was then my cry rang over the mountain peaks and across the wide seas.”

“Ah, Persephone, in answer to your cry, I sped like a bird over land and sea in my yearning, but none could tell me of you.”

More of the tale was told; then came Hecate and stood before Demeter and Persephone, where they sat together, and greatly did she rejoice when she saw the holy daughter. From that day did she declare herself to be the queenly comrade and handmaiden of Persephone.

When all joyous words had been said and quiet had come to Demeter and Persephone, a thought which took all gladness from her came to the mother—the thought of the law of the Underworld.

She turned to her daughter with fear at her heart.

“Persephone, a thought comes to me that I would I could put from me.”

* From Lang's tr. Homeric Hymns.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

“Tell me, mother, what it is that troubles you.” Persephone spoke softly.

Demeter turned to her.

“Tell me, child,” she said, “did any morsel of food pass your lips while you stayed in the world below?”

Then was the fair brow of Persephone wrinkled in thought. Slowly the joy which lighted her face faded. Tears came to her as she answered her august mother.

“Mother Demeter, something comes to my mind,—but how can this be?”

“Tell me, child, all that is in your heart.” And fear pierced the heart of Demeter.

Without joy Persephone told how in her hunger she had remembered the law, though foods, tempting and rich, were placed before her. “Then,” she said, “when the swift messenger, Hermes, came to tell me of my going from the underworld I was filled with joy. And the Prince of that realm, in his cunning bade me, before my going, taste the seeds of a sweet pomegranate, so like the food I had known above. Alas, I fear that a few seeds did pass my lips.” And Persephone wept.

Slowly the mother spoke:

“But how could this thing be? This law you knew full well.”

Persephone’s grief grew more bitter, she fell to the earth and through her tears she spoke.

“Joy at my going to the world above swept all thoughts

DEMETER AND PERSEPHONE

from me and it was not until this moment that I had full knowledge of what I did.”

The mother arose and lifted the sorrowing Persephone.

“Be not too full of anguish, my child. What I can, that I will do. Come, let us go and sit in the council of the gods. Zeus and all the Immortals will see that justice is done. What power I have, I shall use so that the decree be not made too severe.”

And so it was that the sable horses drew them to Olympus. Hermes, who had waited for the time when Demeter would answer the summons of Zeus, guided the reins.

DEMETER, BREATHE THINE INFLUENCE

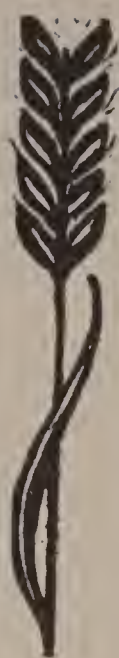
*Sacred Goddess, Mother Earth,
Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods and men and beasts have birth,
Leaf and blade, and bud, and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.*

*If with mists of evening dew
Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow in scent and hue
Fairest children of the Hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.*

SHELLEY

The Roman name for Persephone was *Proserpina*, sometimes called, as here, *Proserpine*.

CHAPTER XVI



DEMETER RETURNS TO OLYMPUS

WITHOUT loss of time the sable horses sped over the wide spaces, and Demeter stood before the palace of Zeus. The golden doors to the great hall swung wide, and Demeter, giver of goodly crops, stood before the celestial council. Beside her stood holy Persephone. Before them went the winged messenger.

With silvery voice Hermes spoke:

“Great Zeus, Demeter with her holy daughter is before you.”

Then all of the immortals gave greeting to Demeter and Persephone, and Zeus bade the fair-tressed mother come nearer to him. When she had obeyed his command, he spoke to her and kindness was in his voice.

“How comes this misunderstanding between us, holy Demeter?”

Then Demeter answered the great Zeus:

“Grief, dread and bitter, filled my heart at the loss of my fair daughter, father Zeus.”

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

“Demeter, giver of fruitfulness to the earth, was there no honor in knowing that the fair Persephone sat upon a throne in a kingdom of great wealth, one of the three kingdoms of the universe?”

“What was honor to me if my eyes were never to behold my daughter again? How could I know of her happiness? Great wealth alone cannot bring happiness, not even to the heart of a god.”

“True words you speak, mother of Persephone, but could you not trust the great Zeus to think of all things with wisdom?”

“Ah, father of all, no message was brought to tell me that this plan came from the heart of Zeus. And when the mountain peaks rang with the sorrowful cry of Persephone, and none came with tidings of her, then I knew only bitterness.”

The celestial beings who sat upon the golden thrones about the room had listened well as Zeus and Demeter talked together. Now, Poseidon, brother of Zeus, brother of Pluto, spoke.

“And why, great Zeus, did my brother Pluto, ruler of the realm beneath the earth, take secretly the fair Persephone? Had Demeter known of the plan, then her heart would not have been filled with anger.”

Zeus, to this, made answer that Pluto had indeed erred.

Now the other gods, eager to offer words of advice, called upon Zeus to hear them.



*"Great Zeus, Demeter with her holy daughter
is before you"*



*Then all of the immortals gave greeting to
Demeter and Persephone*

DEMETER RETURNS TO OLYMPUS

Ares, god of war, spoke first:

“All powerful Zeus, let Pluto be called before this council and proper punishment be given him. He has sinned against one of the greatest of the gods. The thunderbolts forged in my workshop are—”

Athene, goddess of wisdom, interrupted quickly:

“Let us not think so much of punishment for Pluto, the king of the underworld, as of justice for Demeter, the giver of goodly crops. Let us consider carefully what we know and then decide whether it is just to all for Persephone to be given back to her mother.”

Hera, wife of Zeus, and queen of the gods, made answer:

“Surely it is just for a mother to be given her daughter.”

Then Hephaestus, artist and craftsman of the gods, remembering the sadness of Dionysus, spoke.

“Let Persephone dwell with her mother that fruitfulness may come back to the vine.”

Then was heard the voice of Hestia, goddess of the hearth.

“Surely Persephone must dwell with her mother that the prayers about the hearths of mortals shall once again be filled with happiness.”

Apollo spoke with thoughtfulness.

“Is it just, great Zeus, to think naught of Pluto? It was his hope to bring joy to his dreary abode. We must not forget that he is one of the three great gods.”

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

“Is it just to forget,” urged the fair Aphrodite, “that his heart was moved with love and kindness toward the fair Persephone?”

Then spoke Artemis, goddess of the hunt.

“Must we waste thought on Pluto, god of the underworld, while the beasts of the forests die because of his wrongdoing?”

Then the great Zeus spoke slowly:

“Now have we all spoken the thoughts of our hearts.”

Demeter looked anxiously toward her daughter, but before words came, Athene spoke again, voicing what lay deepest in all their hearts:

“In our eagerness to bring fruitfulness back to the earth, great Zeus, are we not forgetting a question of great importance? Has the fair Persephone remembered the one great law of the underworld?”

Sighing deeply, Demeter spoke:

“It is of that I wish to speak, O wise Athene. It is true that the great law of the kingdom under the earth was swept from my thoughts in my joy at sight of my fair daughter. Then after many words of happiness had been spoken the dread thought returned.” Demeter bowed her head.

Then Zeus turned to Persephone and spoke. Though his voice was kind, a stern note was there, too.

“Child, have you tasted of any food in the kingdom of Pluto? Think well upon your answer. If no food

DEMETER RETURNS TO OLYMPUS

has passed your lips, then shall you dwell in honor among the Immortals, but if you have satisfied your hunger, then must you dwell beneath the hollows of the earth.”

Each god upon his golden throne leaned forward, better to hear the answer of Persephone.

Her voice came clearly though her head was bowed.

“Alas, father Zeus, I have tasted food.”

A hush fell upon the council of the immortals.

Then did Demeter tell the tale even as Persephone had told her. When she had finished, the gods pondered long; then Zeus, the greatest and most powerful, spoke, weighing all that he knew.

“Let us now think carefully of what we know. First Pluto erred in taking Persephone unwillingly and without word to Demeter—but not without reason. He feared that the thought of living in the underworld would fill the fair Persephone’s heart with fear and also the heart of her mother, the fair-tressed Demeter. So he conceived the plan of taking her unawares and then when she had beheld the precious stones and rich metals beneath the earth, and the kindness and love in the heart of Pluto, he thought she would find joy in that kingdom over which she would be queen.

“Then there was error in the belief that Demeter would feel that honor had come to her house when her daughter became one of the three great queens.

“When these things were known on Olympus it was

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

my desire that justice should be done. For this reason we have brought Persephone back to her mother, while the gods in peaceful council shall decide all things wisely.

“Though Apollo, god of light, and Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty, have urged some thought for Pluto, all of the other gods of this council have urged the return of Persephone to her mother and this, to me, seemed just. Now comes before us the great law of the lower realm. This law must remain unbroken.”

Athene, goddess of wisdom, spoke thoughtfully.

“It was only by craftiness that Pluto accomplished this, great Zeus, and never was the hunger of the child satisfied. ’Twas, after all, but a few seeds of a pomegranate which passed her lips. Is it not possible to carry out this law of the underworld and yet cause little grief?”

“Some such thought comes to me, wise Athene. Since Pluto erred in many ways, and caused through craftiness the breaking of the law of the underworld, and since the food taken by the child was but a small morsel, I decree that Persephone shall at proper time return again and dwell beneath the hollows of the earth a portion of the year. The other portion of the year shall she dwell with her mother and the other Immortals upon Olympus. Does this decree seem fair to the great council?”

The gods upon their thrones gave word of approval, and Persephone stood close to her mother, murmuring words which came clearly to the ears of Athene.

DEMETER RETURNS TO OLYMPUS

Then Demeter, giver of goodly crops, spoke with kindness and yet with a firmness which no immortal dared deny.

“Great Zeus, it is not in my power to give fruitfulness to the earth while my heart yearns for my daughter. So in that portion of the year, when Persephone dwells in the murky gloom, shall the seeds of Demeter be hidden. And in that portion of the year when Persephone dwells with me the seeds shall burst from their hiding and cover the wide earth with fruits and flowers.”

Again the immortals were filled with foreboding.

“Ah, great Zeus,” Athene spoke in a voice of pleading, “Make not the time too long when Persephone shall dwell beneath the hollows of the earth.”

Again the great Zeus pondered, then slowly made reply.

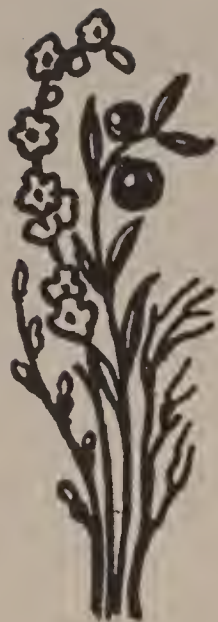
“A third portion of the year shall Persephone dwell in the kingdom below the earth and during the other two-thirds portion of the year shall she dwell with her mother. When the earth blossoms with fragrant flowers, that shall be spring, but when the flowers are hidden, that shall be winter. Give ear, Demeter, for my command must prevail. During this portion of the year Persephone shall dwell with the Olympians and therefore I declare this to be the season of fruitfulness.”

And thereto the great Zeus nodded his powerful head.

PERSEPHONE

*And when, in springtime, with sweet-smelling
flowers
Of various kinds the earth doth bloom, thou'lt come
From gloomy darkness back—a mighty joy
To gods and mortal men.*

HOMERIC HYMN
Bulfinch's Age of Fable

THE END OF THE
OLYMPIC COUNCIL

THUS ended the decree of Zeus. There was silence in the great hall as the Gods waited to learn if any anger remained in the heart of Demeter, for she stood without speaking.

Athene, goddess of wisdom, went to her and spoke soft words.

“Demeter, giver of all good things, did you hear the voice of Persephone when she said that it saddened her because Pluto had no wish for her to leave him? Surely Persephone cannot be wholly unhappy in his realm.”

Then Persephone spoke:

“Dear Mother Demeter, it is true that it is my dearest wish to dwell with you and the other Immortals, but it is also true that Pluto treats me with kindness in his gloomy abode. Then, too, it is pleasant to lighten somewhat the murky darkness of the rich palace beneath the earth. So, dear mother, be cheered in knowing that the far-seeing Zeus, the lord of the deep thunder, has

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

decreed that your child for the third part of each year, shall dwell within the murky darkness of the rich palace beneath the earth, but the other two parts with her mother and the rest of the Immortals. So he has promised and so shall it be, for thereto he has nodded his great head.”

Yet Demeter stood in silence, and again Athene, goddess of wisdom, spoke:

“Be not too unrelenting, great Demeter. A third portion of the year is not overlong. Go forth with gladness and increase now the grain that brings life to man and beast, for this is the season in which Persephone dwells with the Immortals.”

Then at last did Demeter speak, and there was a great calm in her voice.

“Know you all, Olympic gods, that the heart of Demeter knows that justice has been done, and know you, great father of all, that I disobey not the commands of Zeus.”

Then there was rejoicing among all of the celestials. Each one came with fair words for Demeter and her daughter. Each one thought of the joy that would now return to the realm he guarded, to the beasts who were sacred to him, to the mortals whose hearts had so long been filled with fear.

Then fair words came from the lips of Demeter.

“I speak with sorrow. Much suffering I caused



*“When winter ends, and spring serenely shines,
Then fat the lambs, then mellow are the wines,*



*Then sweet are slumbers on the flowery ground,
Then with thick shades are lofty mountains crowned."*

through my great bitterness. Too little faith I had in our immortal council.”

Then Zeus made answer:

“Those are gracious words from one who has suffered, one who has had some cause for bitterness. What may seem fair to one may not seem fair to another. Therefore we must keep from secret councils, for justice can be done if we seek one another and speak with truth all the thoughts of our hearts.”

Athene spoke with kindness in her voice, and a look of hope in her thoughtful face.

“Some good may come from all this suffering if it has taught us to trust one another more fully.”

All of the immortals, save Ares alone, received this thought warmly. Ares stood apart, a scowl upon his brow. If all the realms of the universe were suddenly to cast out secret councils and speak at all times with truth and fairness, then where would come the chance for misunderstanding? And if there were no misunderstandings, then what need would there ever be for his thunderbolts? Where would he ever show his great prowess? No one saw the unhappy thoughts of Ares. All eyes were upon Demeter.

Lovingly the goddess of the harvest took Persephone by the hand and through the entrance of the great hall they passed from sight.

Without waiting, the celestials followed Demeter from

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

the lofty room. Silently they stood among the clouds and looked after the goddess of the harvest.

Swiftly Demeter and her fair daughter sped down from the peaks of Olympus and came to the bare fields of earth. They lay fallow and leafless. The white barley grain was hidden and the furrows were empty of corn.

As the celestials watched with eager eyes, Demeter of the fair garland went among the fields. Speedily she sent up the green stalks of grain, buds came upon the trees, fruitfulness returned to the vine, and the wide earth became heavy with leaves and flowers. Again the deep-voiced kine, broad of brow, munched the dewy grass; again fleet deer sped over wooded hills, and again tall sheep, thick of fleece, grazed the green meadows. The streams fed from fresh springs glistened and danced as they hurried onward to the sea.

On hill and valley, mountain and plain, mortals raised their arms in worship before the altars of their gods. The sacred thigh bones of the animals of the sacrifice were well wrapped in fat and thrown upon the blazing wood on the altar and the fragrance arose to the cloudy heights where the celestials watched, taking pleasure and honor from the sweet sacrifice of mortals. After pouring out pure libations of gleaming wine, the joints were eaten by a glad people in a gay festival. After they had feasted and crowned the victors in running, in wrestling, and in boxing they worshiped their gods with music.

THE END OF THE OLYMPIC COUNCIL

Boys in the first bloom of their youth, skilled at the dance, moved with twinkling feet to the rhythm of the clear-toned lyres. Balls, beautiful in color and light as air, were tossed toward the shadowy clouds as they danced over the bounteous earth. Minstrels were stirred to untried songs telling of the greatness of the gods on Olympus.

And then as the sun lighted the faces of the worshiping mortals, the great father saw that their hearts were filled with gladness and their prayers with earnest thanksgiving.

THE IMMORTAL BANQUET

Each to his lips applied the nectared urn,

.

And unextinguished laughter shakes the skies.

Thus the blest gods and the genial day prolong,

In feast ambrosial, and celestial song.

Apollo tuned the lyre; the Muses round

With voice alternate aid the silver sound.

Meantime the radiant sun to mortal sight

Descending swift, rolled down the rapid light:

Then to their starry domes the gods depart,

The shining monuments of Vulcan's art:

Jove on his couch reclined his awful head,

And Juno slumbered on the golden bed.

THE ILIAD

Pope's translation

Zeus is the Roman Jove.

Hera is the Roman Juno.

Hephaestus is the Roman Vulcan.

CHAPTER XVIII



THE BANQUET OF THE GODS

WHEN the wide earth was covered with fruit and flowers and the hearts of mortals were again filled with thankfulness, then did the great Zeus turn to the celestials and he spoke in winged words:

“What greater moment could come in the immortal lives of the gods more fitting for a time of rejoicing together? Gladness has returned to earth and peace to Olympus. Come let us gather in the royal hall of Zeus. Let Hebe, sweet daughter, goddess of youth and cup-bearer to the gods, bring us the shining cups and fill them to the brim with golden nectar.

“Let us celebrate fittingly the beginning of Persephone’s season with her mother.” Then he turned to Hermes, “Go, with all haste, Hermes, bid the fair-tressed Demeter leave her labors and come with the speed of thought to rejoice with the celestials over the return of Persephone, the coming of spring to the earth. Let the joyous Dionysus be brought to us also.”

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Then Hephaestus spoke:

“Good Sire, I left Dionysus bowed with grief in my workshop in the heart of the mountain.”

And Zeus made answer:

“Ah, good Hermes, go to him. Tell him to choose for himself a fresh garland and come to us in joyous mood. Bring also the nine Muses and the three Graces. Let our eyes be gladdened with graceful dances and our ears with sweet music while Hebe, cup-bearer to the gods, ministers to us.”

Then did Hephaestus speak again:

“There, too, I left golden tripods, and cups of rare design, to grace your banquet, father Zeus. Let Hermes direct the tripods and they of their own power may bear the precious cups hither.”

“Let it be so, Hephaestus. Go with all speed, Hermes.”

“I go, great Zeus, glad bearer of joyous messages.”

In the shining banquet hall of Zeus the white-armed Hera sat, her peacock by her side. Iris, her messenger, and Hebe, cup-bearer to the gods, were making ready the banquet hall for the celestial guests.

The tripods moved silently into the great hall. Many bore food for the use of the gods at the celestial banquet. Others were laden with poppies, with lilies and with dittanies. Hera, fair queen, smiled as she looked at the white blossoms and ash-like leaves of the dittany, for it was her favorite flower.

THE BANQUET OF THE GODS

The shining doors swung wide and more tripods, fresh from the workshop of Hephaestus, entered. Of rare design they were—and all of shining gold. On them were borne cups of gold with rims of silver for the nectar, youth-giving draft of the gods. There were shallow bowls of shining silver with rims of gold for the ambrosia, food for the immortals.

No sooner were the tripods in place than the golden doors swung wide and the celestials, in shining procession, entered the great hall. Hebe and Iris stood near the white-armed Hera as the immortal guests gathered together.

Zeus, king of the gods, entered first. His all-seeing eyes were filled with pleasure as he beheld his banquet hall in readiness. Beside his queen the great god sat, enthroned in gold. Poseidon, ruler of the salt-sea floods, took his place near the great Zeus, his brother.

Athene, the gray-eyed goddess of wisdom, followed with stately tread. Ares, god of war, walked beside her. His attendants he had left behind. He knew that they were no fit companions on this occasion.

Hephaestus, artist and craftsman for the gods, followed. Dionysus, lover of peace and joyousness, was by his side. A garland fresh and gay decked his head.

Then came the fair Aphrodite, goddess of love and beauty. The three Graces, goddesses of the banquet, the dance, and all courtesies attended her.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

Hestia, goddess of the hearth, entered with dignity to grace the banquet hall for only a brief moment. Artemis, goddess of the hunt and the moon, with her brother Apollo, god of music, of prophecy, and of the sun, stepped lightly through the doorway followed by the nine Muses.

Then came Demeter, great goddess for whom they waited, and to whom they wished to give honor. In her arms she carried a horn of plenty from which poured forth luscious fruits and gay flowers as she walked. Beside Demeter, with arm entwined in her mother's, came the fair Persephone.

The celestial assembly arose and raised their cups of gold. With graceful steps fair Hebe carried the golden nectar from cup to cup until all were filled. Then all the place rang with feasting and with gladness. 'Twas then the winged Hermes, swift messenger, entered the golden doors closing them behind him.

Zeus addressed him thus:

"Come, good Hermes, your work is well done. The celestials wait in joyous circle. Join us and sip the golden nectar in honor of Demeter, goddess of plenty!"

When all had sipped the youth-giving nectar, the fair-tressed Graces three circled in rhythmic dance. Then Hebe, fair cup-bearer, and Aphrodite, fair goddess of love and beauty, stepping lightly, joined the circle. Artemis, goddess of the chase, divinely tall, led the



*Spring, with green draperies flowing and bright flowers
falling on every side, danced a glad, gay dance . . .*

THE BANQUET OF THE GODS

Muses in stately dance. Among them sported Ares, while Phoebus Apollo moved with measured step, playing the lyre. Light issued from twinkling feet and fair-woven raiment.

Song, poetry, and music blended in celestial harmony, lead by the joy-inspiring Muses. Ever the gay voice of Dionysus could be heard in laughter and in song while Hebe, with immortal hands, poured nectar into the shining bowls.

Once more Zeus, celestial host, sent his winged messenger on speedy errand. Once more the golden doors opened. The goddesses of the seasons entered the banquet hall. Though they had care of the clouds which shut Olympus from mortal view, all labors of the immortals had ceased while joyousness held sway.

“Welcome,” cried the celestials, “welcome to the goddesses of the fruitful seasons!”

Summer with her arms filled with grain, and Autumn laden with grapes and fruit, stood watching. Spring, with green draperies flowing and bright flowers falling on every side, danced a glad, gay dance which moved the gods to such laughter and applause that the sky shook gently.

And thus was the genial day gladdened with silver sound until the radiant sun descended and was shut from sight of mortals. Then did the gods depart to their Olympic palaces or descended in slanting flight to their

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

earthly haunts. Spring danced forth joyously to gladden hill and valley with her bright draperies and her sweet laughter.

And now Zeus, the greatest of the gods, walked among the stars, and again stood alone, looking down upon the earth below. A great peace filled his heart as he saw sleep come to valley and mountain where happiness had returned to man and beast.

*Sleep broods o'er the mountain crest,
And the folds of the hill,
Hollow and headland rest,
Silent and still.
All things are slumbering,
Not a leaf is stirred,
Of insect or creeping thing
No rustle is heard.
The beasts of the mountain sleep,
And the murmuring bees,
And the monsters that haunt the deep
Of the purple seas;
The swift winged tribes of the air
Have ceased from their flight . . .*

NIGHT IN THE VALLEY

J. A. Pott

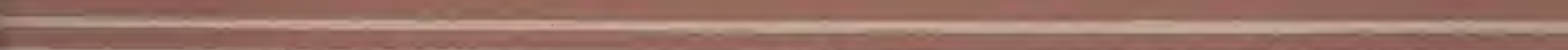
GLOSSARY and INDEX

INDEX

Aegis (e' gis)	38	Elysian Fields (e lizh' an)	145
Amphitrite (am phi trī' te)	54	Fates	146
Aphrodite (af ro dī' te)	81-87	Furies	142
Apollo (a pol' lo)	99-105	Galatea (gal a tē' a)	45
Ares (a' reez)	71-79	Graces	85
Ares, attendants of	72	Hebe (hē' be)	187
Enyo		Hecate (hek' a te)	117-119
Discord		Hephaestus (he fes' tus)	89-97
Dread		Hera (hē' ra)	37-43
Terror		Hermes (her' meez)	33-35
Alarm		Hestia (hes' ti a)	107-111
Fear		Hyperian (hi pe' ri on) a	
Artemis (ar' te mis)	60-69	Titan, father of Helios,	
Asphodel (ass fo del')	145	the sun god. In later	
Athene (ath ē' ne)	73-79	times Helios and Apol-	
Atlas (at' las)	24	lo were the same	70
Caduceus (ca dū' she us)	33	Iris (i' ris)	42, 113
Cerberus (ser' ber us)	141	Lamentation, river of	145
Chalybes (kal' i beez) a		Lethe (lē' the), river of	145
people noted as workers		Minos	142
in iron	43	Muses	60-68
Charon (kā' ron)	142	Calliope (cal lī' o pe)	62
Cronus (krō' nus)	23	Clio (clī' o)	62
Cyclopes or Cyclops		Polyhymnia (pol y hym' ni a)	62
(sy clo peez') or (sy' clops)	89	Erato (er' a to)	62
Cyprus (si' prus)	81	Euterpe (eu ter' pe)	62
Demeter (de me' ter)	113-139	Terpsichore (terp sick' o re)	62
and 155-185		Urania (u rā' ni a)	67
Dionysus (di o nī' sus)	95	Thalia (tho lī' a)	67
Danaides (da nā' i deez)	142	Melpomene (mel pom' e ne)	67
Eleusis (e lū' sis) a place		Naiads (na' yads)	46
sacred to the worship of			
Demeter	121		

Olympus (o lym' pus)	23	Prometheus (pro mē' thūs)	24
Pan	113-117	Proteus (prō' te us)	46
Parnassus (par nas' us) the haunt of Apollo, the Muses and the Nymphs and hence the home of music and poetry	105	Sirens	45
Pegasus (peg' a sus)	104	Styx (sticks)	141
Persephone (per sef' o ne) 118, 132, 155-163		Tartarus (tar' tar us)	142
Pluto	141-153	Titans (ti' tans)	23, 142
Poseidon (po si' don)	45-49	Themis (thē' mis)	137
		Thetis (thē' tis)	45
		Triton (trī' ton)	52
		Zeus	23-31





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